Labour Efficiency of Tertiary Adult Education at universities

External stakeholders, collaborations and partnerships in WBL with Higher Education Institutions in the UK

Context and cases

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Content

1. Introduction

In the following, we present the results of a study on university-enterprise cooperation, collaboration and/or partnership in the field of tertiary lifelong learning (TLL) and university adult education; or, what under the Liberal Arts Education tradition in the UK would be seen as Continuing Education. We analysed three cases of university-enterprise programmes for adults[1], who have left the education system to enter the labour market and who want to access education and training opportunities offered by universities to improve their labour market position. These case studies are complemented by desk research about the national and institutional context of university higher education in each of the partner countries.

Core questions to be addressed are the regulation of TLL systems within the national qualification systems, but in particular the integration of labour market stakeholders in the design of Work Based Learning (WBL) programmes. The project is specifically concerned with the relevance of university provision for the impact on adult learners in the labour market and its influence on their work performance. For this reason, we excluded examples of business-university cooperation in the field of initial education programmes, in which the majority of participants enter direct from compulsory education.

Our strategy for selecting and recruiting suitable programmes was to search for enterprises, which are running in partnership, collaboration and cooperation with universities either bespoke or generic programmes for their own employees/members. In the UK we were able to select three distinct models or forms of university/external stakeholder collaboration, partnership and cooperation involving public and third sector stakeholders; a trade union, leading distance learning higher education institution and a major multinational engineering firm; and a more corporate approach between academia and a major multinational utility provider respectively.

In relation to the area of work based learning a number of issues have been reviewed in the literature including major concerns with aligning academic and workplace learning outcomes and forms of assessment; issues of development funding for WBL programmes; mediating between the quite distinct cultures of academia and industry or business; and a perceived lack of flexibility and long lead times in universities from external stakeholders.

We first describe briefly the UK institutional landscape of education in general, with a focus where relevant, on adult education and adult learners. We then present each of the case studies with details on the programme, the partnership or collaboration with external stakeholders, the learners and its impact on all stakeholders. Finally, we discuss the potential opportunities, but also the constraints or

[1] Adult are here defined as persons, who are older than 18 years and have left the educational system to enter into the labour market According to the methodology of the Adult Education Survey, the adult population is that aged 25 and more, which would be outside of traditional perspectives of formal or compulsory education under normal conditions, which is often seen as a linear progression through full time education that generally begins at 5-7 years and continues until 20-25 years of age.

barriers of cooperation, collaboration and partnership to advance the integration of WBL in higher education.

2. Work-based learning (WBL) in national context[2]

2.1. Short overview of the educational system and structure

The purpose of this section is to provide some context and background to the post-compulsory system and structure as it operates in the UK. In order to do this we will first provide a general overview of the sector; briefly introduce the historical context for the development of adult education in higher education before moving on firstly to summary of lifelong learning in general, and then more specifically at the development and provision of work based learning in higher education.

It is important in any discussion of UK higher education to note that education is a devolved matter meaning that each of the constituent parts of the UK (England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland) develops and implements its own policy and in relation to where this diverges between England and Scotland specifically in relation to post-compulsory provision the differences will be noted.[3]

The post-compulsory system in the UK consists of universities, Higher Education Colleges (HECs) and Further Education Colleges (FECs) with the majority of providers funded by the state. There have been recent inroads to the sector from private providers particularly in England[4] which has travelled furthest down the road of the direct marketization of post-compulsory education.[5, 6] The emergence of private providers has been subject to criticisms[7] about quality, oversight and monitoring in particular in relation to issues of finance specifically access to public funding with a critical report released by the National Audit Office which provides scrutiny of public spending on behalf of Parliament.[8]

In Scotland the FE sector has also been subject to reorganisation which has resulted in the creation of a framework with 13 regions and 27 colleges.[9] In ten of the regions a single regional College exists, often created from the merging of local FECs under one umbrella organisation. Higher education at sub-degree level delivered in FECs plays an important role in widening participation in Scotland with 64% of qualifications awarded from FECs in Scotland (2012-13) at HNC/HND levels.[10]

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[2] The material contained in this section draw heavily on previous works by the authors (Osborne and Houston, 2012; Houston and Osborne, 2013; Osborne, Rimmer and Houston, 2014)

[3] For the purpose of this report, the authors will concentrate on the English and Scottish systems given the location of the selected case studies.

[4] https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/United-Kingdom-England:Organisation_of_Private_Education

[5] https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/207128/bis-13-900-privately-funded-providers-of-higher-education-in-the-UK.pdf;
www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/Publications/Pages/Privateandforprofitproviders.aspx

[6] http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/highereducation/Documents/2010/PrivateProviders.pdf

[7] http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/comment/leader/failing-to-look-listen-or-legislate/2017345.article

[8] http://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/Investigation-into-financial-support-for-students-at-alternative-higher-education-providers.pdf

[9] http://www.collegesscotland.ac.uk/briefings-and-publications/publications/80-colleges-scotland-keyfacts-2014/file

[10] http://www.sfc.ac.uk/web/FILES/Statistical_publications_SFCST042014_HigherEducationStudentsandQualifiersatS/Higher_Education_Students_and_Qualifiers_at_Scottish_Institutions_2012-13_31_March.pdf

The following images provide an overview of the structure of compulsory and post-compulsory education in England and in Scotland.

Figure1:
National Structure England 2014/15 (Source: Eurydice)[11]

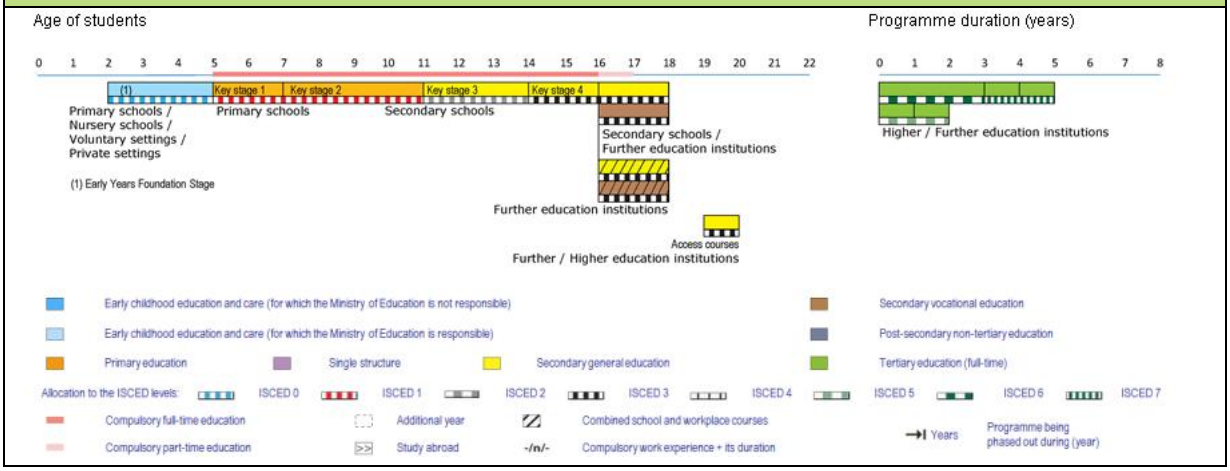
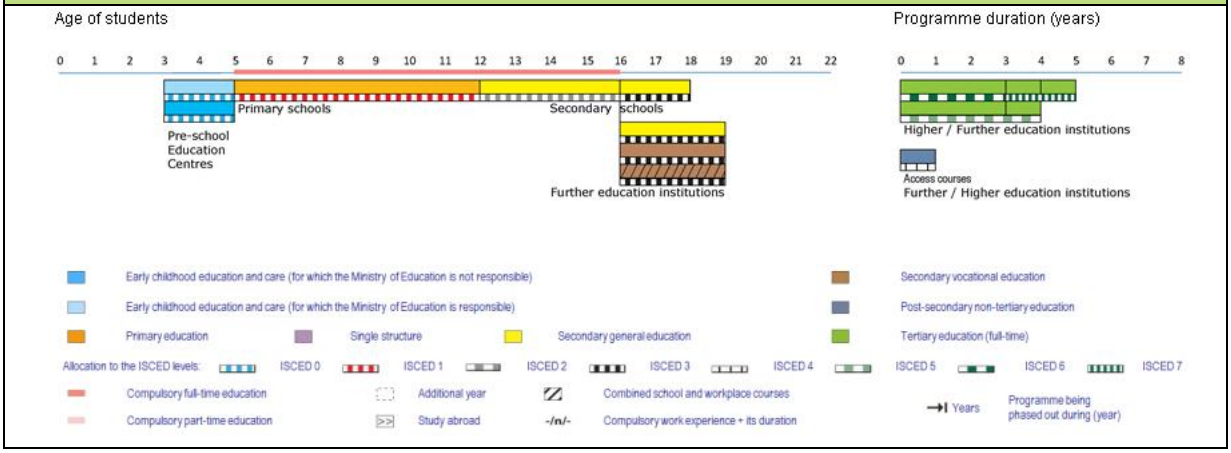


Figure 2
National Structure Scotland 2014/15 (Source: Eurydice)[12]



As can be seen while generally comparable, there are some differences at all levels between the English and Scottish national structures noticeably in relation to transitions between levels and also with the more diverse provision at pre-school levels.

The power to award degrees is regulated by law in the UK and there is a distinction between Recognised bodies which are institutions that can award degrees (these would be recognised as universities), and Listed bodies that offer courses which can lead to an award from a Recognised body; in addition, there are also institutions which can award their own unique degrees known as

[11] https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/United-Kingdom-England:Overview

[12] https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/United-Kingdom-Scotland:Overview

Recognised awards.[13] At present there are 156 Recognised bodies with 16 of them in Scotland and only six of them, all in England, which are private institutions with four for-profit and two which operate as privately funded charitable bodies. In relation to Listed bodies, 653 institutions were identified with a considerable number of these recognisable as FECs. A review by Parry et al suggests that in England, some 349 FECs exist, the majority (283) offering some HE level provision; while a survey by BIS noted 674 private providers of higher education which they reckoned was a very conservative estimate.[14]

FECs are providers of both non-advanced vocational education below HE level and of short cycle Higher Education of one or two year duration, equivalent in the national credit frameworks across the UK of one or two years of the Bachelors offered in universities and HECs. In England, the creation of the Foundation Degree, two year programmes with a vocational or employment focus, has replaced the previous Higher National Diploma (HND) while in Scotland the HND and its one year pre-requisite, the High National Certificate (HNC) are still awarded.[15]

A further difference in the form of qualifications between England and Scotland relates to duration and while in England an Honours degree is typically three years in duration; in Scotland students may exit at the end of third year with an Ordinary degree or as the majority do continue to fourth year and exit with an Honours degree.

Given the likelihood (across the UK) of those studying in FE to be older, have lower levels of formal qualifications gained in compulsory education and to come from disadvantaged and under-represented groups higher education delivered in further education is an important element in ensuring more adults have access to higher education to address the skill requirements of the knowledge economy as set out above.

2.2. Systems and structures of work based/work related learning in HE

Specifically in relation to adult learning in higher education, the UK has a long tradition which dates back to the university extension programmes of Cambridge University which began in 1873 and which developed over the next hundred years into a tradition of Liberal Adult Education delivered both on-campus and off-site and which often had as drivers issues of social justice and individual empowerment.

[13] https://www.gov.uk/check-a-university-is-officially-recognised/overview

[14] https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/207128/bis-13-900-privately-funded-providers-of-higher-education-in-the-UK.pdf

[15] For a comparison of the role of HNC/Ds in Scotland and foundation degrees in England, see the work of Reeve, Gallacher and Ingram (2007)

> *Universities created links with movements concerned with political and social change, such as the Workers Educational Association (WEA), the Independent Labour Party and the Co-operative Party, and created Extra- Mural Departments and later Departments of Continuing Education or Adult Education to co-ordinate LAE work. (Osborne and Houston, 2012: pp.115-116)*

This provision was very much geared towards access for adults who had been denied opportunities for whatever reasons to access higher education and the principal shift in the 1990s was to a much broader conception of widening participation and alongside a shift from widening participation and access among adults to an approach with far more emphasis on young people from under-represented groups and aspiration raising and interventions increasingly focused at the level of the school and in England this was delivered through its Aim Higher programme which was funded from 2004 to 2011.[16]

In relation to the provision of work-based or work-related learning in higher education there is also a long tradition. However, as we shall see, there is little measurement and no requirement to collect or publish data on the scope and scale of work-based or work-related learning in the UK. As autonomous institutions, universities have freedom to design and offer programmes of their own choosing depending on the expected demand.

There are of course subjects like Nursing and Teaching, Medicine and Dentistry where numbers are controlled by funding regulations; and it could well be argued that these also offer what might be seen as work-based and work-related learning. Whilst this is undoubtedly true, the focus here is on broader conceptions of work-based and –related learning and as noted at the level of collaboration and partnership between external stakeholders and institutions of higher education in the provision of WBL programmes.

Work-based and work-related learning in higher education for adult learners is seen as crucial to address the predicted labour market skills gap identified in such communiques as: *New Skills for New Jobs Anticipating and matching labour market and skills needs*; and, *An Agenda for new skills and jobs: A European contribution towards full employment* as part of the Europe 2020 strategy. It is also relevant to debates on work-related learning and upskilling that were identified in the *Leitch Report* produced in the UK and which as we shall see has influenced various funding initiatives in both England and Scotland.

[16] https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/workstreams-research/themes/retention-and-success/widening-access-programmes-archive/aimhigher-0

2.3. Funding regimes - Students

The issue of the marketization of higher education particularly in relation to student funding is an area where divergence in policy between the devolved constituencies of the UK is perhaps most apparent and widely known. In England universities are able to charge up to £9,000 per year in tuition fees for undergraduate courses;[17] whilst in Scotland there are no tuition fees for Scottish domiciled students. Under the vagaries of EU law, this has resulted in a situation whereby EU students studying at undergraduate level in England are liable to pay tuition costs, they do not have to pay fees in Scotland although students form the Rest of UK (England, Wales and Northern Ireland) do have to pay fees if they wish to study for an undergraduate degree in Scotland.

In relation to students support, both England and Scotland offer a system based on both needs based grants and loans for full-time students. However, amounts available, the eligibility criteria and repayment conditions vary. In England the maximum household income for eligibility for needs based grants is £25,000 and the maximum grant is £3,345; while the maximum loan for an independent student is £5,500. In Scotland, needs based grants are lower: up to £1750 available through the Young People's Bursary and £750 available for those over 25 or living with a partner. However, loan amounts are slightly more generous with an independent student able to access a maximum of £6,500 per annum.[18]

2.4. Funding regimes – Sector and Institutional support

There has also been in addition to tuition fees, and student support funding, further divergence in funding in terms of England and Scotland in a number of areas. In relation to funding the post-compulsory education, England has maintained the distinction between the HE and FE sectors and the FE sector has underwent a number of changes. The Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) was abolished under the terms of the Learning and Skills Act (2000) which created the Learning and Skills Council in 2001[19] combining the functions of FEFC and Training and Enterprise Councils. The Learning and Skills Council was itself abolished partly as a result of financial mismanagement[20] and was replaced in 2010 by the Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA) with responsibility for funding further education for 16-19 year olds. The Skills Funding Agency (SFA)[21] took over the remit of the remainder of the Learning and Skills Council's responsibilities. The YPLA was itself closed

[17] Students are not required to pay up front and can apply for a loan to cover the full fee. Repayments are income-contingent and made at the rate of 9 % of income above the threshold of GBP 21 000

[18] http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/facts_and_figures/fees_and_support.pdf

[19] http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/21

[20] http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2009/jul/28/learning-skills-council-quango-debt

[21] https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/skills-funding-agency/about

down in 2012 and its remit transferred to the Education Funding Agency[22] which also has responsibility for school education.

The SFA has recently introduced as an addition to the Foundation Degree route for learners and/or employers in areas of WBL the Higher Apprenticeship which are WBL programmes leading to either awards at Levels, 4, 5 or 6.[23] According to the SFA there are currently 47 Higher Apprenticeships including aerospace, construction, creative and digital media and accountancy. Although numbers are still relatively low, (10,000 in 2012-13) the SFA have been provided with £40 million to add an additional 20,000 places by 2015. At the time of writing, the SFA is currently seeking expressions of interest from higher education institutions to deliver Degree Apprenticeships at Level 6 and has been provided with £20 million to fund this initiative.[24]

Higher education funding in England is the responsibility of the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) which funds and regulates universities and colleges of higher education in England. In 2014-2015 its overall budget was just under £3.9 billion.[25] It also has responsibilities to promote and incentivise, through targeted funding streams, excellence in research, teaching and knowledge exchange.[26] They are the lead regulator in terms of accountability for the public funds they distribute and play a limited role in assisting the government in the regulation of alternative providers of higher education. In addition they collect, synthesise and provide benchmarking information; and they play an important role in informing, developing and implementing government policy. Specifically related to funding and relevant to this report; HECFE invested more than £100 million[27] in the period 2001-2011 to develop Foundation Degrees as part of its wider Workforce Development Programme (WDP).[28] The WDP was specifically aimed at engaging with recommendations contained in the Leitch Review of Skills. Between 2008 and 2011 HEFCE invested £45 million to develop an employer engagement model to increase the number of students on work-based and work related co-financed by employers and institutions. In addition, it also invested £103 million in capacity and infrastructural developments (transformational change) to develop employer engagement in the same period.

The responsibility for evaluating and monitoring institutional agreements on access, widening participation and in the context of £9000 p.a tuition fees, institutional student financial support activities is held by the Office of Fair Access (OFFA), the independent regulator of institutional

[22] https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/education-funding-agency/about

[23] Cert.HE, Foundation Degree, Bachelor Degree respectively.

[24]https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/374552/Employer_Guide_to_Higher_Apprenticeships.pdf

[25] https://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/year/2014/201405/

[26] https://www.hefce.ac.uk/about/role/

[27] http://www.hefce.ac.uk/news/newsarchive/2010/Name,94096,en.html

[28]http://www.hefce.ac.uk/media/hefce/content/pubs/indirreports/2011/RE,1311,Workforce,dev,prog/rd13_11.pdf

agreements with HEFCE, to enable participation by people from lower income and other under-represented groups.[29]

In Scotland, and in contrast to the approach taken in England, efforts have been directed to integrate the funding regimes of further rand higher education and this was specifically linked to government policy, the structure of the Scottish post-compulsory sector and funding incentives through the adoption of a recognisably lifelong learning approach to education and training. This is perhaps best illustrated by reference to *Learning for All*[30] which detailed their widening access strategy. The rationale for the report was clearly stated in the Foreword:

> *In Scotland today, educational participation and achievement is highly skewed, particularly by socio-economic background, geography and gender. People from lower socio-economic groups are less likely than the average to stay on in school and achieve, or to participate in higher education. These patterns are so stark that they cannot be explained by differences in innate ability. If we want a more just and effective society with people well equipped to work and contribute to their communities, then we have to tackle the causes of these patterns.*
>
> *We also need to do so for economic reasons. The Scottish Executive's economic aspirations require a high-quality, widely accessible education system if they are to succeed: not one that benefits only some. And we need to do so because learning transforms people's lives, improving well-being, confidence, health and lifetime earnings.*

This is now subject to the publication of an annual update *Learning for All: Measures of Success* with its ninth edition published in March 2015 which sets out how and in what ways outcome measures participation and achievement have changed on an annual basis.[31]

In the same year, The Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 2005[32] dissolved the Scottish Further Education Funding Council (SFEFC) and the Scottish Higher Education Council SHEFC and created a new Scottish Funding Council (SFC). With an annual budget of £1.6 billion[33] SFC contributes towards the costs of learning and teaching, skills development, research, innovation and other costs such as staff, buildings and equipment in Scotland's 25 colleges and 19 universities and higher education institutions.[34] This development it is suggested can be directly linked to the integrated strategy outlined in Learning for All and also to the SFC's strategy on employability

[29] http://www.offa.org.uk/about/

[30] http://www.sfc.ac.uk/web/FILES/Access/learning_for_all_publication_september_2005.pdf

[31] http://www.sfc.ac.uk/web/FILES/Statistical_publications_SFCST062015_LearningforAllMeasuresofSuccess/SFCST062015_Learning_for_All_2015_Measures_of_Success.pdf

[32] http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/Bills/25083.aspx

[33] 2014 figures

[34] http://www.sfc.ac.uk/aboutus/aboutus.aspx

Learning to Work[35] which was to support college and university efforts to build capacity and good practice with a view to enhancing student employability of which WBL was an element. In Learning to Work Two[36] over £4 million in funding was allocated to four Work Placement Projects on:

Education into Enterprise[37]

- *to make accredited work-placement opportunities available to students enrolled in HE courses which do not currently offer this option at participating institutions;*

E-Placements Scotland[38]

- *place 750 students of any discipline at any level of study in participating universities and colleges in business and information technology placements in the IT industry ranging from 3-12 months;*

Third Sector Interns[39]

- *place 200-300 students in flexible format paid placements (350 hour maximum) with third sector organisations;*

Making the Most of Masters[40]

- *helps masters programmes source and implement work based dissertation projects. These will be aimed at companies working in Scottish Government key economic sectors and will be aimed particularly at small to medium sized enterprises*

2.5. Careers and guidance

A further area of divergence in approach can be identified in relation to the provision of careers services to young people and adults. The careers landscape of the constituent parts of the UK was examined by Hughes who noted that although similarities exist, the development of a quasi-market model in England has diverged markedly from the model that operates in Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland.[41]

With reference to Scotland, a strategy was developed specifically in order to provide an integrated service as envisaged as part of policy in relation to economic strategy and in particular as envisaged in Skills For Scotland: A Lifelong Learning Skills Strategy for Scotland (2007).[42] Skills Development

[35] http://www.sfc.ac.uk/skills/LearningtoWork/LearningtoWork.aspx

[36] http://www.sfc.ac.uk/skills/LearningtoWork/LearningtoWork.aspx

[37] http://www.sfc.ac.uk/web/FILES/Skills_LearningtoWorkTwo/Education_Into_Enterprise.pdf

[38] http://www.e-placementscotland.com/

[39] http://www.3rdsectorintern.com/

[40] http://www.mastersprojects.ac.uk/

[41] Hughes, D. (2013) The changing UK careers landscape: tidal waves, turbulence and transformation, *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, 41, (3), pp226-239.

[42] http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/197204/0052752.pdf

Scotland (SDS)[43] was created in 2008 by merging a number of agencies involved in careers, skills and training at regional and national levels including Careers Scotland, the Scottish University for Industry, and the skills and learning functions of Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise.

This is in contrast to England for example where adult guidance and support is separate from statutory provision to school leavers and the young[44] with individual schools having the responsibility for careers provision for their pupils and as such according to Hughes[45] does not have the integration across levels and sector which the more consistently lifelong learning nature of the model of advice, support and information that Scotland offers.

2.6. Quality Assurance

Quality assurance of higher education is the responsibility of the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA)[46] with an affiliated body in QAA Scotland[47] responsible for the, as we have seen, divergent context in operation. The QAA is independent of government and HEIs and acts in the public interest to monitor and advise on standards and quality in UK higher education. They undertake reviews under contract to the relevant funding council. The main areas of work include:[48]

- *publishing and maintaining the UK Quality Code for Higher Education*
- *conducting evidence-based external reviews of higher education providers and reporting our findings publicly*
- *investigating concerns about academic quality and standards*
- *conducting research and sharing information about good practice to improve quality*
- *involving students in our quality assurance work, our governance, and our reviews*
- *consulting and working with all those who have an interest in the quality of UK higher education*
- *working internationally with other agencies on common criteria for standards and quality*
- *providing training and events to help higher education providers develop and improve their own quality assurance processes*
- *advising government on applications for degree awarding powers and the right to be called a university in the UK*
- *regulating the Access to Higher Education Diploma which provides an alternative route into higher education for adults.*

In their strategic plan for 2014-17 they have three main aims:

[43] https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/

[44] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/careers-guidance-for-young-people-in-schools

[45] See footnote 11.

[46] http://www.qaa.ac.uk/home

[47] http://www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us/scotland

[48] http://www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us

1. *Enhance the quality and secure the standards of UK higher education wherever delivered in order to maintain public confidence.*
2. *Provide leadership, through knowledge and resources, in assuring and enhancing the quality of higher education within the UK and internationally.*
3. *Extend and enhance the value and reach of QAA's services within and beyond UK higher education.*

In addition, and perhaps of relevance, is that in addition to regulating quality, they are also involved in the research, development and dissemination of measures aimed at improving the quality of the learning experience through a range of 'Enhancement' activities.

> *Two of our review methods - Institutional Review (England and Northern Ireland) and Enhancement-Led Institutional Review (Scotland) - involve the exploration of a particular theme, providing an opportunity to look in more detail at a specific aspect of the student experience. In Scotland this work informs the Enhancement Themes publications.*

Of particular interest to the project is the QAA Scotland Enhancement Theme of *Employability* where a number of the case studies undertaken as part of the theme relate to work based and work related learning.[49] These include: *Working Out? Placements and Careers Skills*;[50] *Integrating Employability, PDP and Work-based Learning within the Curriculum*;[51] and, *Enhancing Graduate Attributes via Employer Engagement in HE*.[52]

QAA also conducted institutional audits in the area of work based learning, placements and employability in 2004 and in an early report noted that based on returns from 70 institutions 12 specifically noted WBL and specific arrangement to support and 70% reported on placement activities.[53] A second report in 2008 reported on a further 59 insutitonal aduits and noted ele3mtns of good practice in work based learning in the areas of: student support; ensuring quality and standards in WBL; and, academic assessment of WBL.[54]

[49] http://www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/resources/case-studies/employability

[50] http://www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/pages/docdetail/docs/case-studies/working-out-placement-and-careers-skills

[51] http://www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/pages/docdetail/docs/case-studies/integrating-employability-pdp-and-work-based-learning-within-the-curriculum

[52] http://www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/pages/docdetail/docs/case-studies/enhancing-graduate-attributes-via-employer-engagement-in-he

[53] http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/Outcomes-institutional-audit-Work-based-placement-learning-employability.pdf

[54] http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/Outcomes-institutional-audit-Second-series-Work-based-placement-learning-employability.pdf

2.7. Qualification frameworks

Given the differences in qualifications and structures noted above it is not surprising that differences also exist in national qualifications frameworks for higher education: *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications of Degree-Awarding Bodies in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ); and the *Framework for Qualifications of Higher Education Institutions in Scotland* (FQHEIS). Both UK frameworks were designed meet the expectations of the Bologna Declaration and align with A Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA).[55] The following tables provide details of how the levels compare.[56]

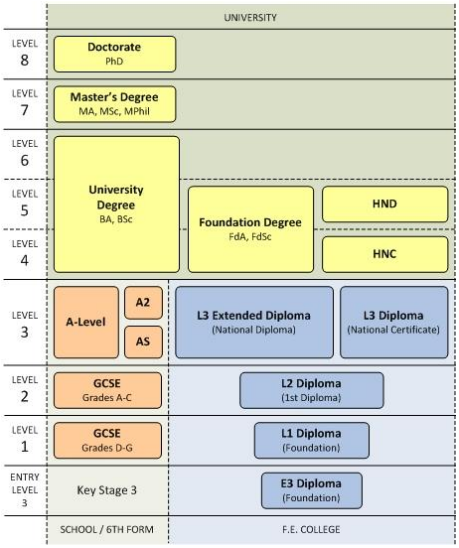
Typical higher education qualifications awarded by degree-awarding bodies within each level	FHEQ	FQHEIS	Corresponding QF-EHEA cycle
	FHEQ level[a]	SCQF level[b]	
Doctoral degrees (eg, PhD/DPhil, EdD, DBA, DClinPsy)[c]	8	12	Third cycle (end of cycle) qualifications
Master's degrees (eg, MPhil, MLitt, MRes, MA, MSc)	7	11	Second cycle (end of cycle) qualifications
Integrated master's degrees (eg, MEng, MChem, MPhys, MPharm)[d]			
Primary qualifications (or first degrees) in medicine, dentistry and veterinary science (eg, MB ChB, MB BS, BM BS[e]; BDS; BVSc, BVMS)[f]			
Postgraduate diplomas			
Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE)[g]/Postgraduate Diploma in Education (PGDE)[h]			
Postgraduate certificates			
Bachelor's degrees with honours (eg BA/BSc Hons)	6	10	First cycle (end of cycle) qualifications
Bachelor's degrees		9	
Professional Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) in England, Wales and Northern Ireland[g]			
Graduate diplomas			
Graduate certificates[i]			
Foundation degrees (eg, FdA, FdSc)	5	NA	Short cycle (within or linked to the first cycle) qualifications
Diplomas of Higher Education (DipHE)		8	
Higher National Diplomas (HND) awarded by degree-awarding bodies in England, Wales and Northern Ireland under licence from Pearson[j]		NA	
Higher National Certificates (HNC) awarded by degree-awarding bodies in England, Wales and Northern Ireland under licence from Pearson[j]	4	NA	
Certificates of Higher Education (CertHE)		7	

In addition, there also differences between general qualifications frameworks which also include vocational education and training and secondary education. In England and the rest of the UK the

[55] QFUK (2010) Referencing the qualifications frameworks of the United Kingdom to the European Qualifications Framework http://scqf.org.uk/content/files/europe/QFUK_Joint_Report_-_Updated_March_2010.pdf

[56] Source: http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/qualifications-frameworks.pdf (page 15)

Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF)[57] is in operation while in Scotland the Scottish Qualifications and Credit Framework maps qualifications against levels.[58]



QCF

SCQF

[57] http://www.accreditedqualifications.org.uk/qualifications-and-credit-framework-qcf.html

[58] http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/FQHEIS-June-2014.pdf p5

3. Relevance of Tertiary Lifelong Learning and work-based/-related learning

Writing almost twenty years ago, Brennan and Little (1996) were commissioned to provide a comprehensive overview of the possible scale and scope of WBL and related programmes in UK higher education.[59] They noted that much of the interest in WBL was driven by concerns, not least at the European level about structural changes in the global economy and the impact of this on national and European labour markets and noted that '*the closer integration of learning and work is a central theme of policy debates across Europe about skills formation of the workforce and strategies for economic competitiveness and enterprise renewal*.' (p. 2) Specifically on Europe they cite the work of Somerlad (1996) who in *Work Based Learning for Enterprise Renewal: Panacea or Problematic?* reported the results of a EU funded project on WBL. In terms that are remarkably similar to statements and pronouncements made 20 years later she identified four main reasons underlying the interest in WBL:

> *(i) economic restructuring and productivity changes requiring increased investment in human capital; (ii) workplace reorganisation, whereby firms seek to optimise key skills of employees through process-driven strategies for education and training embedded in the production process itself; (iii) knowledge assets as the source of competitiveness (of central concern are learning processes that contribute to creation and mobilisation of knowledge as the foundation for continuous innovation and competitiveness); (iv) financing of continuing training; governments' interests in supporting work based learning initiatives as a way of shifting costs that have traditionally been met by the state*.[60]

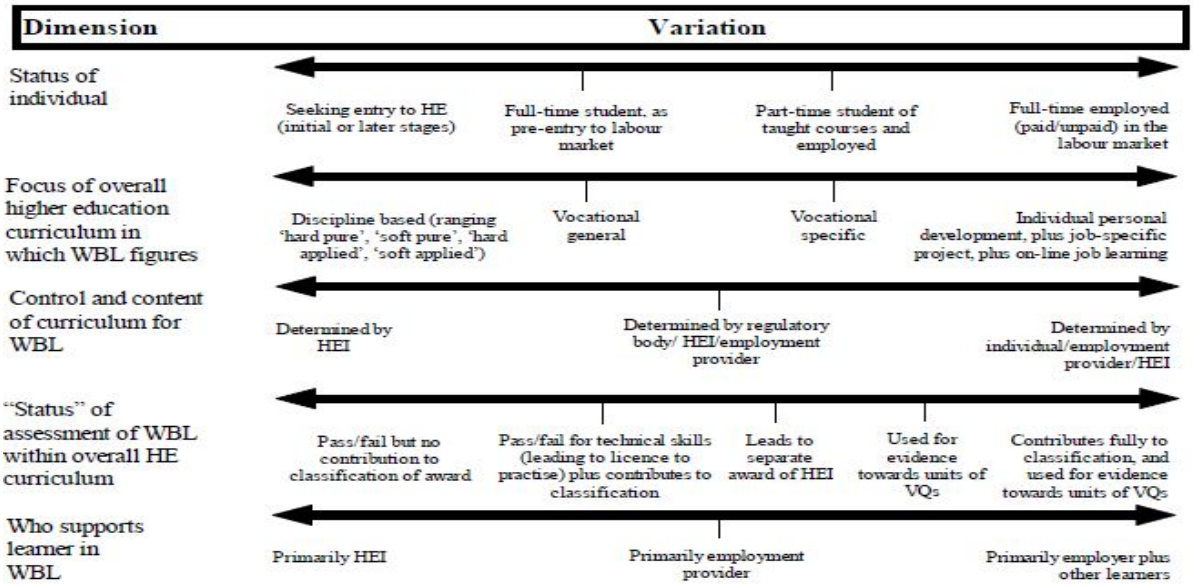
In attempting to define what WBL is and what is might contain they note that WBL at least in the form of industrial placements in engineering and technology course since at least the 1950s. They explore notions of learning *at* work; learning *through* work; and, learning *for* work and suggest that defining the purpose and structure of what counts as WBL can sometimes be problematic. They then move onto scope current provision and present a number of possible models which attempt to codify or characterise various forms of WBL.

[59] https://www.open.ac.uk/cheri/documents/Areviewofworkbasedlearninginhighereducation.pdf

[60] Brennan and Little, 1996: p3

Figure3

Dimensions of experience led work based learning in higher education[61]



In the course of their overview they touch upon many issues which are still prevalent today in discourses of WBL in higher education. The note the difficulties in employer engagement and the tensions between academic and workplace in terms of assessment of learning; and the requirement to determine frameworks which make explicit the knowledge and skills being developed in the workplace. The table above presents one way of conceptualising the various dimensions present in WBL and attempts to capture a number of issues of relevance to WBL in higher education including questions about status of the learner, control over design and content and issues of support.

Building on the dimensions identified in the preceding table and based on their review of current activity, Brennan and Little then identify four main forms of WBL: Types A, B, C, and D.

> *A is the traditional placement element of a sandwich degree or work based learning units with full-time programmes. Examples of B are the professional experience parts of courses for teachers, nurses and social workers. In C either an existing higher education programme is "translated" into a form that can be delivered in the workplace, or learning inherent in a job is "mapped" against an existing higher education curriculum. D is concerned with the learner recognising that generic (transferable, life) skills and values have been developed by work experience. However, the development of generic skills and*

[61] Brennan and Little, 1996: p51

> *values does not belong exclusively to D, and such development is recognised as a vital contribution made by all types of work experience.*[62]

Citing another indicator that little has changed in the past twenty years Saunders writing in 1995[63] also noted policy directives concerned with 'the creation of a workforce with the skills, competencies and productivity to succeed in an environment of global competition' which are familiar to anyone involved in recent debates on skills and the employability agenda. He notes the focus of funding and initiatives aiming to:

> *…. create closer links between further and higher education institutions and work, second, to help providers of education and training to develop processes which will enable individuals to take more control of their learning and 'working careers', third, to ensure that qualifications are 'relevant to the needs of the individual, and fourth, to support educational and training providers to become 'learning organisations' themselves. (p204)*

He further notes that much of this early work in the area of WBL was concerned with the integration of work based learning and academic programmes in terms of expressing, measuring and defining as learning outcomes. This is a concern that is still raised in current debates. Irving (2008) reviews common methods in current use for assessing WBL in higher education and notes the tensions between what employers may need and what an HEI can deliver in terms of accreditation and qualifications. She also provides some recommendations for planning sustainable learning assessments which can capture learning outcomes and competences required by the employer and which also satisfy academic quality assurance concerns.[64]

Many of the issues identified by Brennan and Little (1996) and Saunders (1995) have been revisited by the Higher Education Academy (HEA)[65] more recently in a series of reports commissioned either specifically on WBL, or on WBL elements in relation to other initiatives on transitions to work, employability and employer engagement. In addition, other stakeholders including trade unions, funding councils and vocational sector organisations have also commissioned and undertaken research into WBL.

[62] Brennan and Little, 1996: p62

[63] Saunders, M. (1995) The Integrative Principle: higher education and work-based learning in the UK, *European Journal of Education*, 30 (2) pp203-216.

[64] https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/sites/default/files/WFD_Organising_assessment.pdf

[65] https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/

A scoping study commissioned by the HEA with three Scottish HEIs and undertaken by Connor and MacFarlane (2007),[66] sought to identify key sources in the literature, different approaches and strategies to WBL currently in operation in higher education, and finally elements of good practice in methods and approaches to promote develop and sustain work-based learning in higher education. One of the key concerns they raised was engagement with employers, especially those in SMEs, and from their review some suggestions were made about ways to engage more successfully with groups of employers. Connor and MacFarlane (2007, p. 5) also note the potential for WBL to widen participation through "attracting more non-traditional students to HE, especially those from vocational or work-based routes who want to take study which integrates work with learning". The potential for WBL to widen participation is also noted in a study of foundation degrees by Braham and Pickering (2007),[67] who note that the concept of work-based learning is, according to the QAA (2010),[68] an integral component in the development and design of foundation degrees.

In 2008, the HEA commissioned and published *Work Based Learning: Costing Study*[69] a report on the cost implications of work based learning in comparison to traditional delivery in order to provide institutions thinking of developing WBL provision with models to allow comparisons to be made. Three institutions took part in the pilot study to develop a costing model for WBL and to apply it to compare costs between work-based and campus-based provision. All three institutions found it hard to achieve accurate information on costs for academic and administrative time outside 'normal' timetabled activity but did manage to produce a model and all three models were similar in terms of unit-cost. However, in addition to initial set up costs involving adapting systems and processes they identified a number of ongoing costs that would tend to make WBL more expensive than campus based provision: management of employer relations, shorter course lifecycles and smaller cohorts thus negating economies of scale. In addition, and conversely they also identified a number of aspects of WBL which might result in cost savings including: less call upon estates and facilities, lower use of staff time, and reductions in some administration costs. Finally, the three case study institutions provide some recommendations for those thinking of developing WBL provision.

The *Flexible Pedagogies: employer engagement and work-based learning* report by Kettle (2013: p4)[70] began by 'considering whether the primary driver is facilitating flexible access to lifelong learning, or if it is the development of a flexible customised system that addresses lifelong learning and the skills training needs of potential and existing workers.' In an overview of the field through

[66] Connor, H. and MacFarlane, K. (2007) *Work Related Learning (WRL) inHE – a scoping study*. Glasgow: CRLL/HEA. https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/sites/default/files/WRLreport_January2007.pdf

[67] Braham, J. and Pickering, J. (2007) Widening Participation and Improving Economic Competitiveness: the Dual Role of Work-Based Learning within Foundation Degrees. In: Young, D. and Garnett, J. (eds.) Work-based Learning Futures. Proceedings from the Work-based Learning Futures Conference Buxton, April 2007. Bolton: UVAC.

[68] QAA (2010) Foundation Degree Qualification Benchmark. Gloucester: QAA. http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/1192/

[69] https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/sites/default/files/costing_work_based_learning.pdf

[70] https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/sites/default/files/resources/EE_wbl_report.pdf

reference to case studies it recognised the tensions inherent between enhancing the learner experience and responding to employer demands and provides 'a model for those wishing to explore the extent of flexibility in the pedagogical offer when considering new developments that involve employer engagement' (*Op. cit.*).

Employer engagement was also the focus of a report by Thurairajah and Williams (2009): *Working the Curriculum: Approval, Delivery & Assessment*[71] which was primarily concerned with the tensions identified by Saunders regarding the integration of work based and academic learning and assessment. Three main areas are identified including the importance of employer engagement in the design and delivery of a curriculum; ensuring the quality or WBL; and, how and in what ways can assessment in the workplace be defined, measured and recorded.

While increased employer engagement in WBL was of interest, the main focus of the papers presented in *University management of work-based learning*[72] (Tallantyre, 2010) was the integration and embedding of systems and structures to support WBL at the institutional level in order to address some of the challenges identified in relation to collaboration and partnership in WBL.

The final review of WBL in the UK is a practice guide *Introduction to Work-Based Learning* produced by the HEA Physical Sciences team which sought to provide an overview of current practice outlining case studies from six English and one Scottish HEI on their WBL provision.[73] As with the LETAE project, the project sought to gain the perspective of the learners, the institutions and the external stakeholders. They suggest that there are several factors that contribute to the successful development of WBL many of which are reflected in the analysis of the LETAE case studies:

> *1. Establish a learning contract between the HEI, employer and employee.*
>
> *2. If possible, allow for the identification of an achievable work problem or problems that can be worked upon and solved as part of the learning experience.*
>
> *3. Promote the need for work-based projects to involve working on current or new projects within the employers business.*
>
> *4. Allow for the potential for accreditation of prior learning and prior experiential learning; this may be department or institution specify, but criteria are required to ensure learners understand what is required and accepted for accreditation.*
>
> *5. Design modules and projects to utilise and develop learner's transferable skills.*
>
> *6. Ensure that modules and projects are constructed to allow for student-centred learning practices. (Ibid. p20)*

[71] https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/sites/default/files/employer_engagement_1_cebe.pdf

[72] https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/sites/default/files/University_management_of_work_based_learning.pdf

[73] http://www.hestem.ac.uk/sites/default/files/an_introduction_to_work-based_learning.pdf

They also noted a range of challenges for HEIs, employers and learners embarking on the development of WBL provision, again many of which are reflected in the various LETAE case studies. For HEIs, issues included: shifts from traditional teaching methods to more flexible delivery; tensions between academic and work-based assessment; issues of equity in student support and 'learning experience' for work-based and campus-based learners; and, issues of control over content in course design. For the employer issues identified included: a perceived lack of relevance of elements of the content; the pace of technical change may mean skills superseded by the time of graduation or qualification; reluctance to release employees for blocks of time; and concerns about employees exercising improved career options once qualified. Finally they noted a number of issues for learners involved in WBL to be aware of including: impact on work/life/study balance; issues of support and guidance (who should provide it and when – employer or HEI); inadequate focus on individual learning needs; the perceived relevance of some content; and like employers, an awareness of their improved opportunities in the labour market.

In spite of the issues which they raise, the authors conclude by noting a range of benefits which may accrue to learners/employees, academic institutions and external stakeholders/employers in relation to WBL provision if it is properly integrated and incorporated in academic provision. As noted above, many of the benefits identified are also present in LETAE case studies:

Benefits for the HEI:

1. Potential for a lower assessment burden.

2. Shared responsibility on learner tutorship.

Benefits for the learner:

1. Develop work-based learning and work-related skills simultaneously.

2. Exploiting the workplace as a learning resource.

3. Existing knowledge activated as a foundation for new knowledge.

Benefits for the employer:

1. Flexible, tailored to your needs.

2. Improved workforce performance and productivity.

3. Increased employee motivation – higher staff retention.

4. Meets skills shortages – grow your own workforce.

5. Work-based learning – little time off the job, minimal disruption.

6. Projects directly related to your business.

7. You [the employer] are closely involved in the delivery.

8. Potential to accredit company training programmes. (Ibid. p28)

Finally, it is instructive to engage with two pieces of research on WBL at the EU level. While the research noted below in no way reflects the scope and scale of interest in WBL it does indicate that

issues and challenges noted in the UK context are common across the EU. A more detailed and in depth engagement of the EU context in relation to WBL in higher education will be provided in the project comparative report.

The recent Eurydice report Adult Education and Training in Europe: Widening Access to Learning Opportunities[74] (2015) although not directly concerned with WBL did however identify a range of barriers common to those raised in debates on WBL. The main constraints identified were the difficulties in combining education and training with family life and responsibilities; time issues in terms of conflicts with work schedules; a lack of prerequisite qualifications and difficulties associated with recognition of prior learning; and a range of financial issues. The report also stressed the need for outreach and guidance activities to raise awareness and provide robust information in the area of WBL; itself the focus of an ELGPN (European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network) Report: Work-based Learning and Lifelong Guidance Policies.[75]

Another relevant piece of research on WBL in Europe is provided by the Work Based Learning as Integrated Curriculum (WBLIC) project (2013) funded by the Lifelong Learning Programme aimed at identifying best practice in WBL.[76] They note that the dominant approach to WBL in Europe appears to be through work placements and reflection and that it tends to be concentrated in newer rather than traditional universities. They also note that alternative routes into higher education are rare and the UK has a significantly higher proportion (28% compared to around 5% in other European countries) entering through non-traditional entry routes. In terms of employer engagement they report that the evidence is limited and note that WBL is seldom identified or reported as a distinct entity in strategic policy documents and when it is, the data does not allow a full understanding of its scope and the scale of future potential.[77]

The review of studies presented above suggests that WBL is active and expanding in UK higher education and although at varying pace within the EU. However, as universities are autonomous institutions and the fact that WBL and related activity is currently captured in a comprehensive manner it is difficult to put any definite figures in relation to the scope and scale of UK WBL. Many of the issues have been present and reflect concrete conditions in many of the LETAE case studies. So too are many of the challenges in relation to: employer engagement, assessment, funding, and costs and benefits to learners, academic institutions and external stakeholders who work in collaboration and/or partnership to deliver WBL opportunities to address the perceived challenges of an increasingly high skill information, learning and knowledge society and economy. However, the

[74] http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic_reports/179EN.pdf

[75] http://www.elgpn.eu/publications/browse-by-language/english/elgpn-concept-note-no.-5-work-based-learning-and-lifelong-guidance-policies/

[76] http://www.wblic.org.uk/

[77] http://www.wblic.org.uk/wblhe/files/WBLIC_Overview_of_WBL_in_Europe.pdf

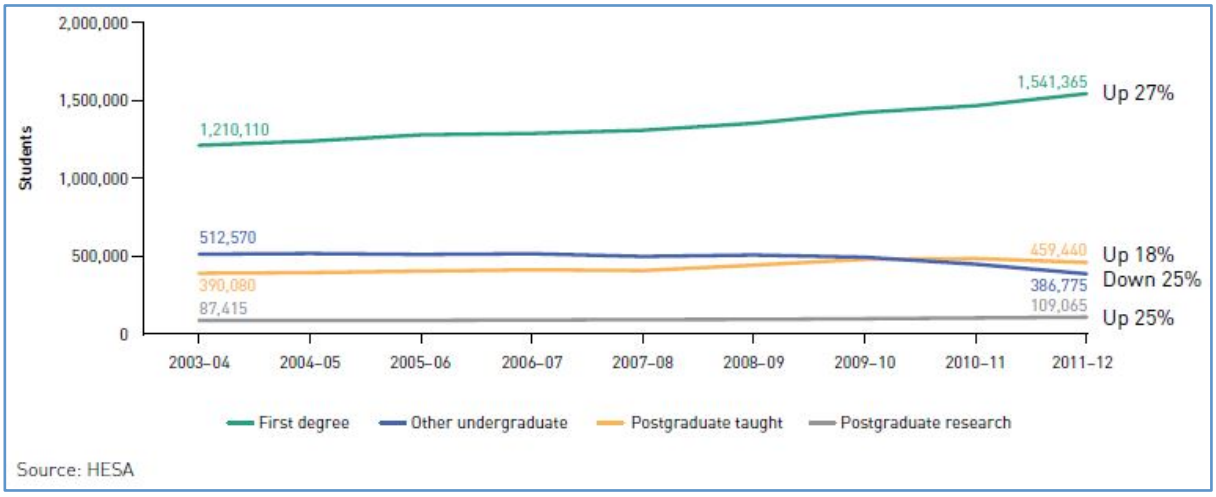
challenges are formidable as evinced by the citations to very similar concerns voiced at both UK and European levels 20 years ago in a more conducive economic climate.

3.1. Participation numbers and tables UK

In order to situate the information on the UK higher education environment the following tables and figures present data on a variety of indicators including level and mode of study and also age and gender. Again where relevant comparisons between Scotland and England will be made and some possible interpretations for these provided.

If we examine trends in the numbers of students by level of study we can see that despite or perhaps as a result of the economic crisis and tight labour market there has been a noticeable and almost linear increase of 27% in those studying at degree level and it is suggested that much of this increase can be related to the increase in tuition fees in England noted earlier and the conditional removal on caps on entrants that accompanied that decision. Contrast the picture for other undergraduate or sub-degree student numbers where there has been an almost corresponding fall of 25% coinciding with the onset of the crisis and economic downturn.

Figure 4
UK Students by level of study, 2003–04 to 2011–12[78]



Given our focus on divergence between England and Scotland it is perhaps instructive to compare the relative size of the higher education sector in each country. While not an exact measure the following table shows the total number of students studying at English and Scottish higher education institutions and provides an indication of the relative scale of the two systems. It also provides information on

[78] http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/highereducation/Documents/2013/PatternsAndTrendsinUKHigherEducation2013.pdf (page 8)

recent trends. Total numbers in general varied by only a few percentage points across the period but a slight increase can be seen for English institutions from 2007-08 possibly as a result of the aforementioned changes to the finding regime and accompanying measures.

Table 1
Total student numbers by country of institution, 2003–04 and 2012–13[79]

	English institution	Scottish institution
2003–04	1,831,890	198,650
2004–05	1,856,930	202,760
2005–06	1,894,835	207,840
2006–07	1,912,050	215,560
2007–08	1,922,180	210,180
2008–09	2,005,840	215,495
2009–10	2,093,635	220,910
2010–11	2,097,215	221,075
2011–12	2,097,230	216,320
2012–13	1,944,995	214,785

A closer look at the period 2008-2013 suggests a degree of consolidation with HE reducing numbers of sub-degree provision, and FE reducing numbers in degree provision.[80] However, it wold appear that sub-degree numbers in FE grew at more than twice the rate of degree numbers in HE perhaps indicating progress in vocational and/or WBL despite the economic climate.[81] As we have seen, sub-degree level study is an important contributor to work based learning provision in both England and Scotland.

Table 2
Higher education students by institution type and level of study, 2007–08 and 2012–13[82]

		2007–08	2012–13	Change	% change
First degree	**HE institutions**	1,306,840	1,528,480	221,640	17%
	FE institutions	33,135	22,110	- 11,025	-33%
Other undergraduate	**HE institutions**	498,130	275,360	- 222,770	-45%
	FE institutions	116,515	161,710	45,195	39%

[79] Adapted from Patterns and trends 2014 supplementary data (XLS 118 KB)

[80] http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/highereducation/Documents/2013/PatternsAndTrendsinUKHigherEducation2013.pdf

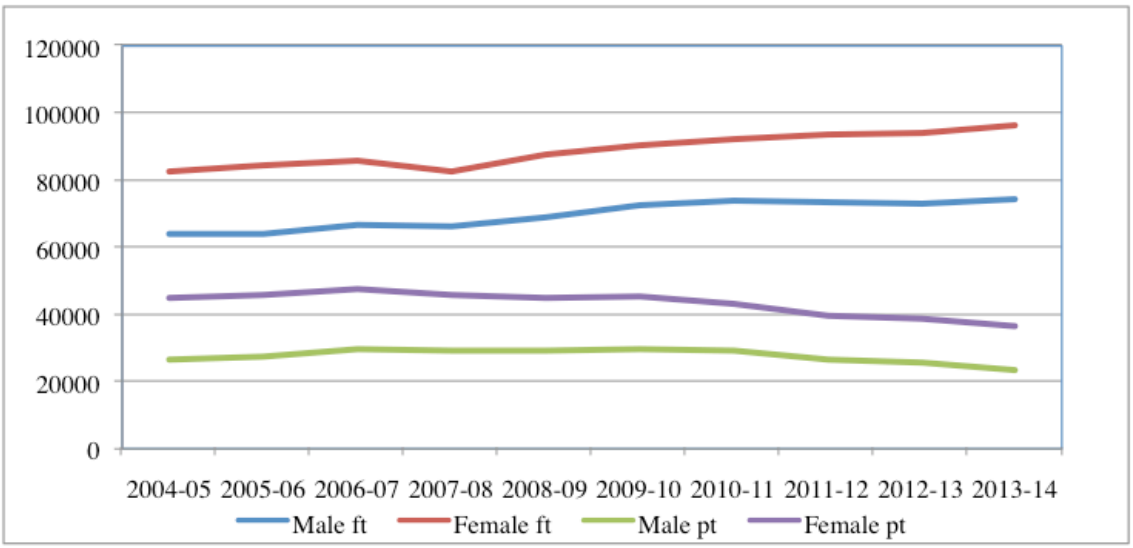
[81] http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/highereducation/Documents/2014/Patterns2014dataFINAL.xls

[82] Adapted from Patterns and trends 2014 supplementary data (XLS 118 KB)

In relation to gender, data suggests that moves to improve the gender balance in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics)[83] have been having some impact, for example females now account for 40% of full-time enrolments to Physical Sciences and Mathematics; however in Computing Science and Engineering and Technology the figure is just 15%. However, in some subject areas it could be argued that more needs to be done to address the imbalance in favour of males with only around 20% of enrolments to full-time undergraduate programmes in Subjects allied to Medicine, Veterinary Science and Education.

Having examined data mostly relating to UK level data the following tables provide a breakdown of Scottish figures for those studying higher education in both HEIs and FEIs. Data is resented on mode of study, gender and age.

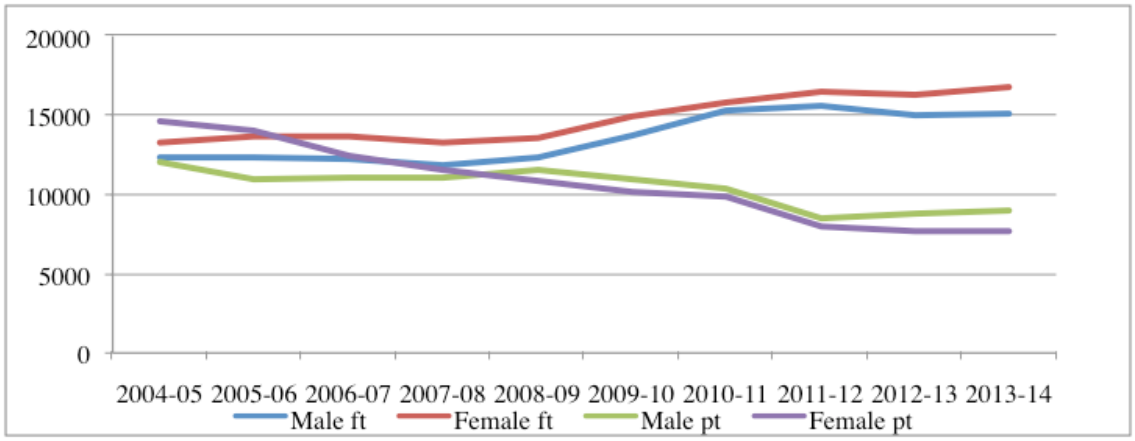
Figure 5
Students in higher education in Scottish HEIs by mode of study and gender, 2004-05 to 2013-14



For Scottish students in HEIs, there was gradual but relatively stable growth of +16% over the period 2004-2014 for both male and female full-time with an increased rate of growth after 2008; Conversely, while there was an increase for both male and female part-time this was followed then by a gradual decline which was greater for females (-18%) than for males (-10%).

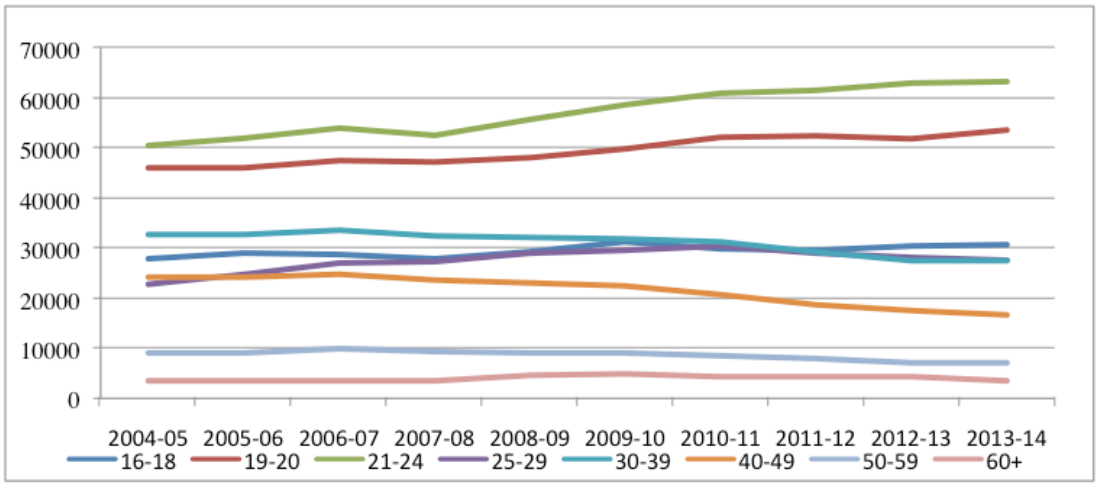
[83] http://www.wisecampaign.org.uk/files/useruploads/files/wise_stats_document_final.pdf

Figure 6
Students in higher education in Scottish Colleges by mode of study and gender, 2004-05 to 2013-14



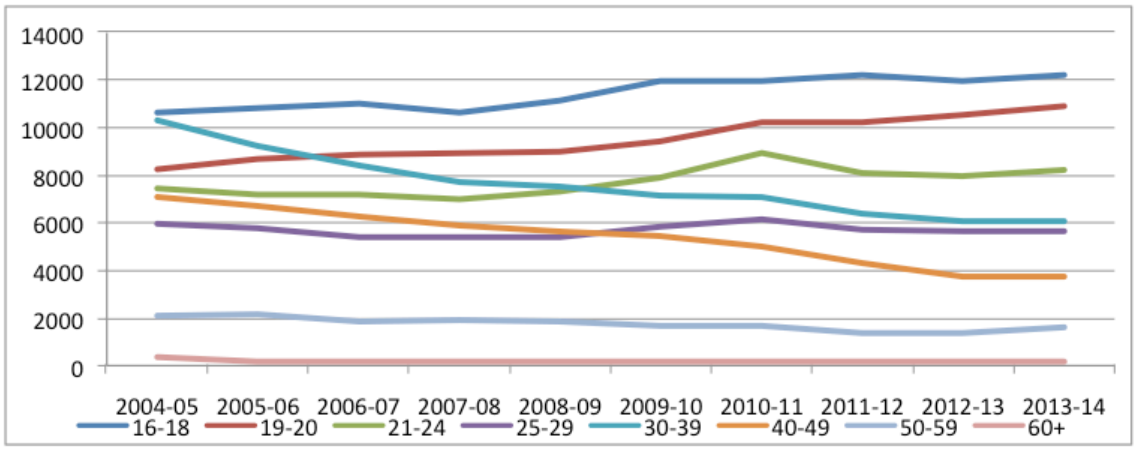
In contrast to the relatively linear pictures for HEIs, the picture for higher education in FE is far more complex with a clear indication of an impact in 2008 and subsequently a clear divergence between full- and part-time students. Between 2004 and 2014 female part time students declined by almost half while part-time males declined by a quarter. Interestingly there seems to have been no more additional impact of the recession on the steady rate of decline in female part-time FE students. There was growth in full-time numbers of +23 % for male and +26% for female students studying higher education in college and a clear rise in the rate of growth after 2008.

Figure 7
Students in higher education in Scottish HEIs by age, 2003-04 to 2012-13



In relation to the age composition of higher education and trends in Scottish HEIs over the period 2004-2014 we can see that the four youngest age-bands all exhibited growth with those aged 21-24 growing by +25%. Conversely, with the exception of those over 60 who, although modest in numbers had growth of around +7%; older student numbers declined with the greatest rate of decline (-31%) suffered by those aged 40-49. The most noticeable possible impact of the economic crisis in 2008 can be seen in the change in the rate of growth of those aged 21-24 and to a slightly lesser extent by those aged 19-20 who would generally be classified as traditional students.

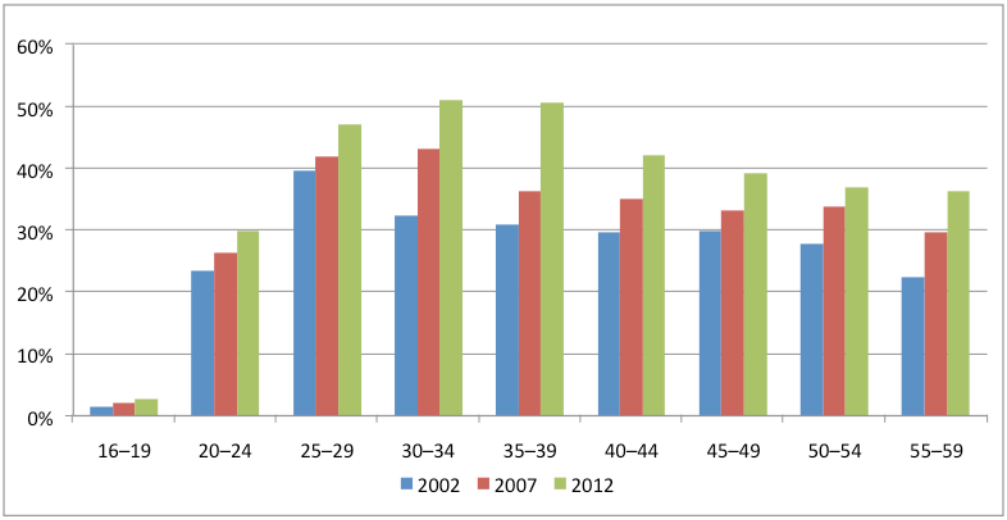
Figure 8
Students in higher education in Scottish colleges by age, 2003-04 to 2012-13



In relation to trends in the age composition of students studying higher education qualifications in Scottish colleges; as with higher education during the period it is in the younger age bands that we see evidence of growth. However, the growth by age is slightly different in that only those under the age of 24 experience growth. There is a noticeable impact in 2008 for those aged 16-18 and 21-24 while the increase (+32%) for those aged 19-20 is more linear. Again, a decline is evident in older learners with this most evident for those aged 40-49 (-47%) and aged 30-39 (-41%).

The data presented above provides contextual data on Scottish and UK trends in relation to those currently in compulsory and post compulsory education; with an emphasis on those undertaking higher education level qualifications by age, gender and mode, in both higher and further education institutions. The final figure presented in this section examines the distribution of higher education level qualifications in the workforce by age in the period and provides some indication of the progress the UK has made in increasing the proportion of its workforce with higher level qualifications.

Figure 9
Percentage of UK population in employment with higher education qualifications by age, 2002, 2007 and 2012[84]



3.2. EU comparative charts and tables[85]

The following tables provide some comparative context to accompany the overview of the educational system and structure of the UK and how it then can be compared on a number of indicators to various EU Averages. The first set of indicators are concerned with males and females aged between 15 and 64 who have only the most basic of educational qualifications as measured using the UNESCO ISCED 2011 scale.[86] These are followed by data on males and females (15-64) gaining ISCED levels 3-4 and 5-8.[87]

[84] http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/highereducation/Documents/2013/PatternsandTrends2013dataforcharts.xls

[85] The data presented in this section are all sourced and adapted from EUROSTAT: http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database

[86] http://www.uis.unesco.org/Education/Documents/isced-2011-en.pdf

[87] While the focus of this report is on higher education, it is argued that the contextual data is important in indicating the scale and scope of the challenges to be faced in raising qualification levels among the workforce.

Figure 10
Less than primary, primary and lower secondary education (levels 0-2 – ISCED11): Males 15-64

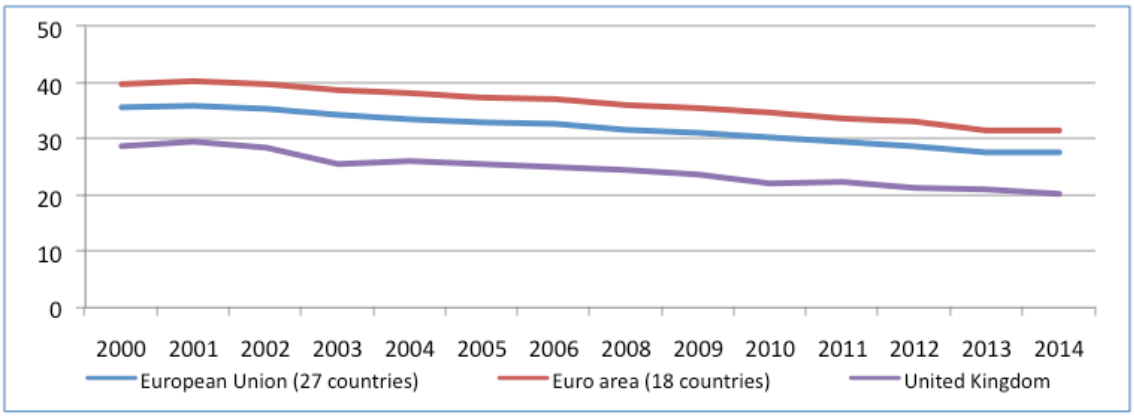
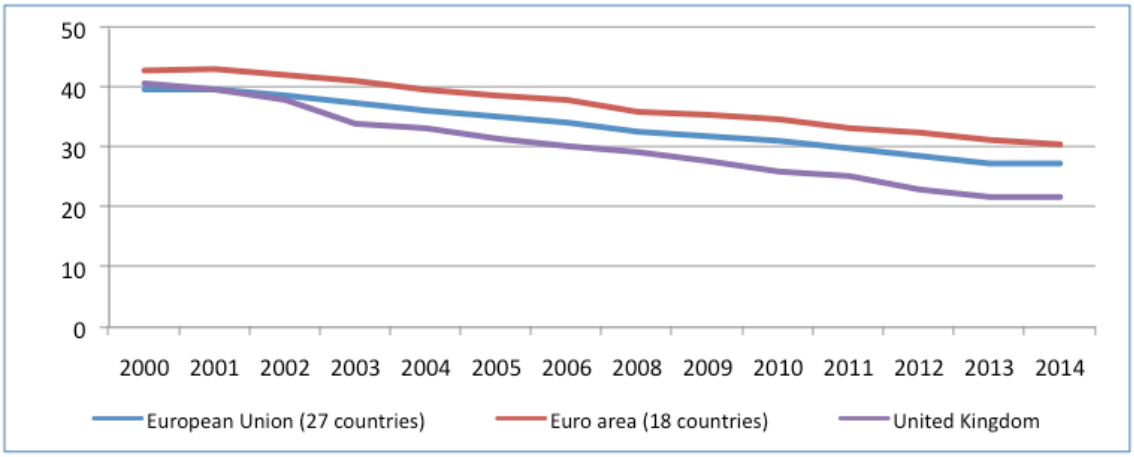
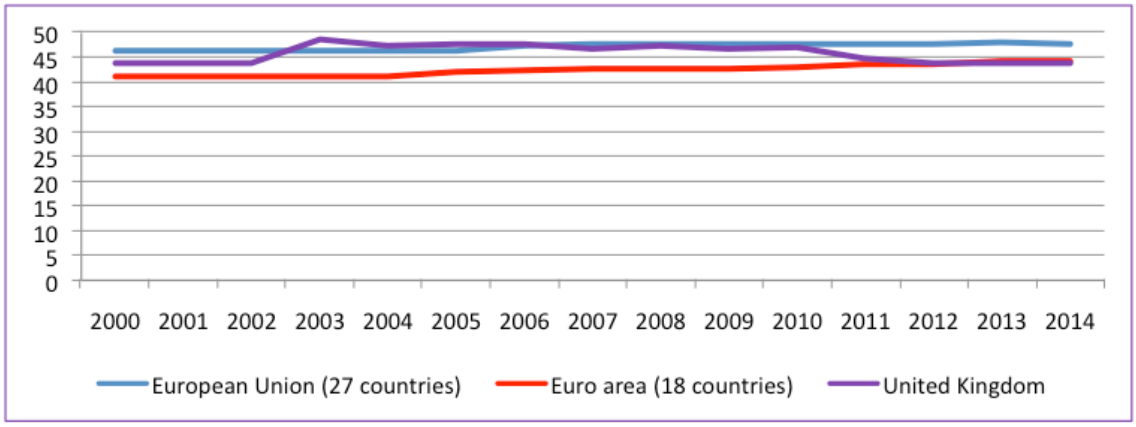


Figure 11
Less than primary, primary and lower secondary education (levels 0-2 – ISCED11): Females 15-64



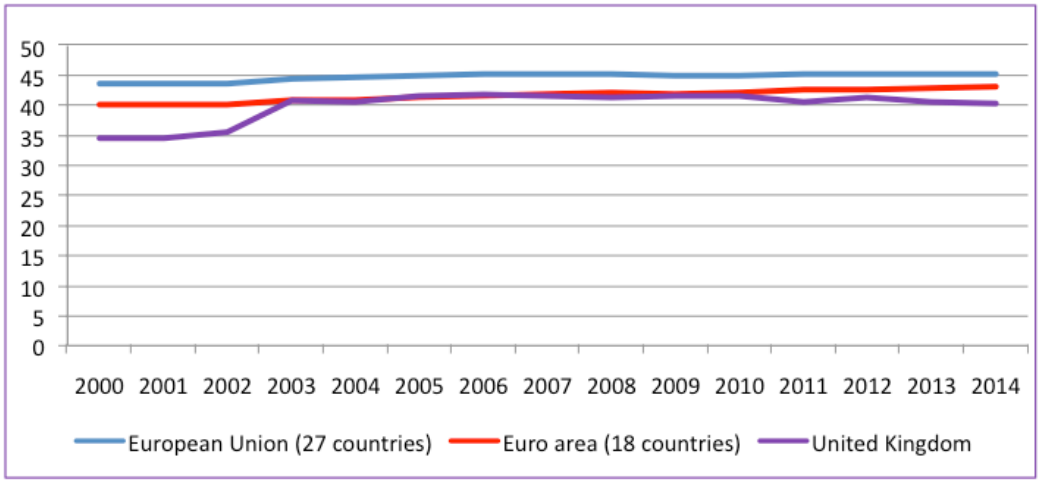
As can be seen, and perhaps indicating the challenges to be faced (and the progress made) in relation to those with the lowest levels of qualifications. While for males at the beginning of the period (2000) there were clear differences between the UK and both EU27 and EU18; for females however, there was much less diversity in rates for those without at least Level 0-2 qualifications. Over time, for males there has been steady progress in the reduction of the rate of the UK, EU27 and EU 18 although the initial differential has been maintained. For females, a similar differential appears over the course of the period beginning around 2003 which is also when it appears that UK females had a greater rate in the reduction of those without level 0-2 qualifications. In terms of gender equality there is little observable difference.

Figure 12
Upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education (levels 3 and 4 – ISCED11): Males 15-64



When we look at the proportion of those aged 15-64 gaining at least level 3-4 level qualifications we can see a slight improvement in EU27 and EU18 for both males and females and relative stability. However, while we note again, in line with improvements in basic qualifications around 2003 in the UK for males and females, a relatively sharp increase then relative stability before a slight dip beginning in 2010 for males and 2012 for females. In addition, in contrast to basic qualifications we do start to see a slight gender imbalance in favour of males.

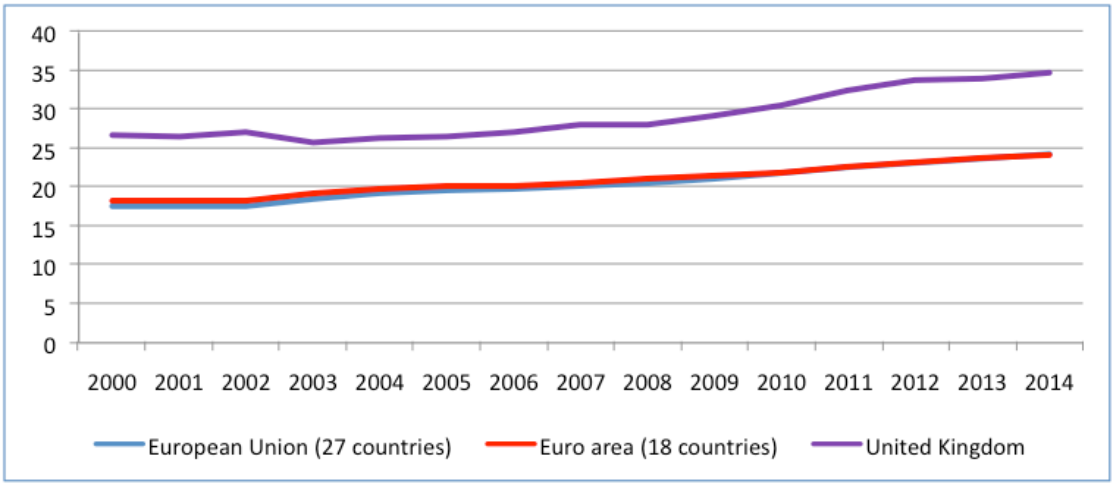
Figure 13
Upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education (levels 3 and 4 – ISCED11): Females 15-64



The UK appears to have been more successful in converting school level qualifications to tertiary level than the average EU level both before and after major expansion. Also of interest is that despite

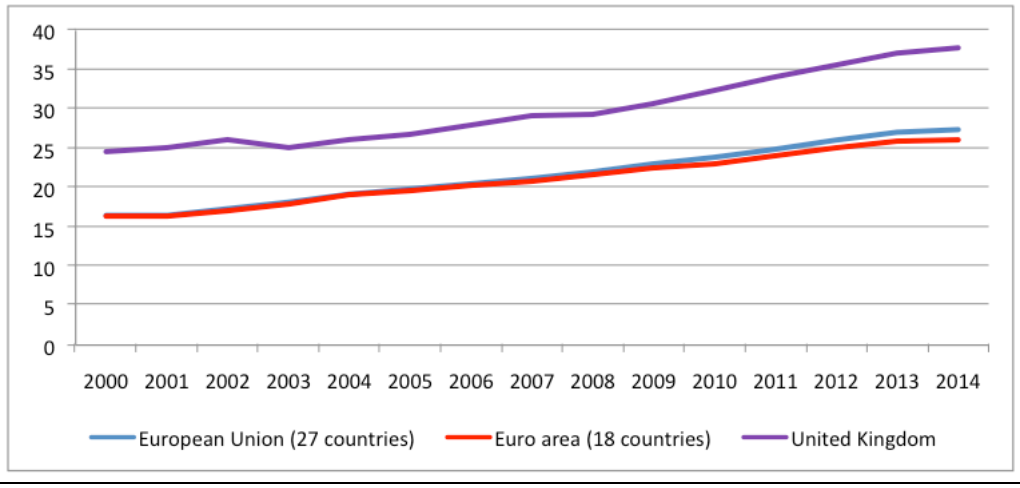
the apparent gap in attainment of those joining to create EU 27, this is not replicated at tertiary level again suggesting that there is greater level of conversion in those countries that have been subject to EU enlargement.

Figure 14
Tertiary education (levels 5-8 – ISCED11): Males 15-64



A positive indicator in relation to Europe 2020 is that levels have increase in the period 2000-2014 at UK, EU27 and EU18 and this occurs for both males and females. For females, the relative increase over the period was greater than that for males at UK, EU28 and EU18 levels.

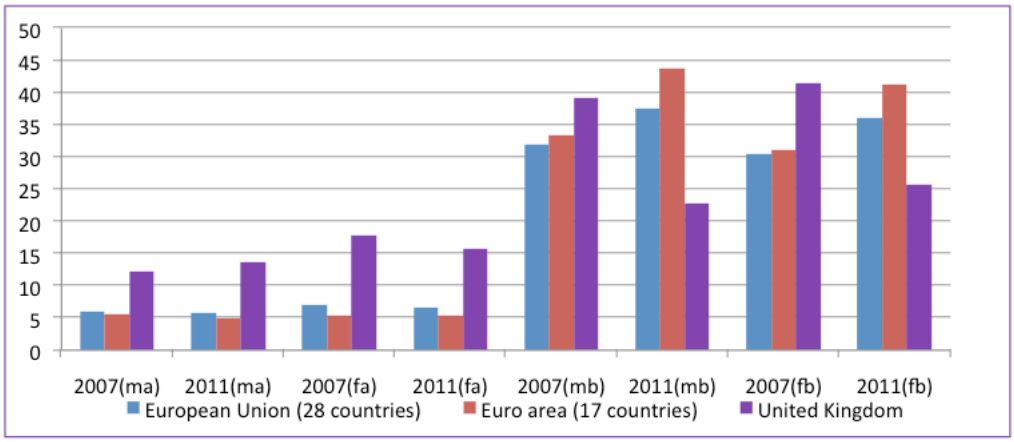
Figure 15
Tertiary education (levels 5-8 – ISCED11): Females 15-64



The final chart in this section provides details of Participation rates (%) in education and training by sex in 2007 and 2011 and provides some indication of trends in the provision of workforce education and training.

While the relatively higher levels of tertiary level qualifications in the UK were noted above, in relation to job related training the picture is very different in comparison to EU averages. As can be seen, while EU28 and EU18 countries increased the proportion of those participating in non-formal job related training 2007 and 2011 in the UK the picture is reversed. In relation to formal job related training the UK while a slight decline for females is noted and a slight increase for males, rates are still considerably higher than those for EU averages.

Figure 16
Formal education and training
(ma = males; fa = females)/ Non-formal education and training (mb = males; fb = females)



One possible interpretation is that, and data appears to confirm this,[88] is that employers in both public and private sectors in the UK were far less likely to invest in training during the economic crisis than their European counterparts. The decline in participation in the UK since the start of the financial crisis is also apparent when data for participation in education and training in the last four weeks is examined and can be set against the relative stability of the EU average.[89]

[88] Eurostat: http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database?node_code=trng_nfe5#

[89] Participation rate in education and training (last 4 weeks) by sex and age (trng_lfse_01)

4. Case Studies and methodology

4.1. Why Case studies?

The research approach adopted by LETAE project is the Case Study method. This method of inquiry is deemed to be particularly well suited when the object is to study contemporary phenomena within real-life contexts; and, where the relevant behaviours under investigation cannot be manipulated and is widely used in conducting evaluations (Yin, 2012).

The in-depth focus on the case(s), as well as the desire to cover a broader range of contextual and other complex conditions, produce a wide range of topics to be covered by any given case study. In this sense, case study research goes beyond the study of isolated variables. As a by-product, and as a final feature in appreciating case study research, the relevant case study data are likely to come from multiple and not singular sources of evidence. (Yin, 2012: p4)

More specifically, the project adopts a Multiple-Case Study research strategy with embedded units of analysis (Yin, Ibid.), which will compare different tertiary level work-based or work-related programmes for adult learners (>25) both within and across a cluster of EU Member States (CZ, DE, ES, FL, UK) and Turkey. Theoretically, the study has three components: an individual focus on personal development, perceptions and behaviour; an organisational focus on processes, structures, functions and collaborations; and a social element in relation to issues of inclusion, transitions and outcomes. Each partner selected three case studies that fit the criteria outlined below.

The study will be partly exploratory in nature, although it does build on the work of the THEMP project. In contrast to THEMP, which focused on the pedagogical issues of adult learning in HE programmes, labour market transitions and social inclusion; LETAE is more focused on the work-based and work-related elements of programmes. Both projects however, place an emphasis on the nature of collaborations and partnerships between higher education institutions and employers, sector organisations, trade unions, local government and other relevant stakeholders.

The project intends to identify cases of good practice in relation to partnerships with external stakeholders in the delivery of work-based and work related learning for adult learners. It will examine potential opportunities and barriers in relation to their influence on individual and organisation or stakeholder benefits, whilst establishing a dialogue between the various stakeholders involved about ways to increase or improve such benefits and to provide tools to measure such impact.

4.2. Justification of choice of cases

Due to the qualitative and interpretive nature of the Multiple Case Study research design adopted by the project the three cases studies in each partner country were chosen on the basis of a *convenience* sample.

What this tended to mean in practice was that the research team both collectively and individually utilised their knowledge and expertise in the area to approach both personal and professional contacts and networks and asked for expressions of interest from those institutions featuring suitable programmes in relation to the main LETAE criteria:

1. *Programmes in partnership with relevant external stakeholders (employers, sector organisations, trade unions, local government, etc);*
2. *Programmes with a focus on work-based or work-related learning (professionalization, accreditation,); and,*
3. *Programmes with a relevant presence of adults ('mature' students >25)*

For some partners case selection often required a number of revisions to original choices as cases would 'drop-out' of the process although the reasons for this differed. In one case the contact person and gatekeeper had left the institution and led to communication difficulties. In others a considerable delay in a obtaining a response from corporate partners required alternate cases to be recruited.

The three selected UK cases[90] it is suggested reflect distinct models of work-based/-related learning and reflect three different forms of partnership and collaboration; and also three different forms of delivery and organisational model. One possible interpretation is that the three selected cases reflect the role of the state, capital and labour in the provision of work-based/-related learning for adults.

The first case delivered by the University of Glasgow was designed to provide professional accreditation to workers in the field of community learning and development; and as it is a work-based programme all applicants must have at least two days per week of paid or unpaid work in the field. Delivery and assessment is 60% academic and 40% practice based and the programme is accredited by the relevant professional body *The Standards Council for Community Learning and Development for Scotland*.[91] In general students are over 25 with generally more females than males[92] and around 25 per year are enrolled on the three year course. *It is suggested that in this case, the partnership is at the level of the sector rather than at the individual level as with other cases where a more clearly defined partnership or collaboration is evident.*

The second case is delivered by the University of Aston in England and the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI) in Scotland for the major utility Scottish and Southern Energy (SSE)

[90] The cases are presented in more detail in Section 4

[91] http://www.cldstandardscouncil.org.uk/CLD_Standards_Council/CLD_Standards_Council

[92] Although in recent years gender is becoming more balanced.

PLC. The learners who are recruited (both internally and externally) and selected by SSE for entry to their Trainee Engineer programme study toward a Foundation Degree in Power Engineering which is a two year programme. It is delivered in six, two week blocks per annum with learners returning to their employment duties when not studying. After a final year on site the worker/learners are qualified. While originally the programme attracted workers already in the company wishing to progress, increasingly the intake is dominated by new generally younger recruits. *The programme was very much a corporate response to recognition of an ageing workforce at the intermediate engineer level.*

The third case is B. Eng. *delivered by the Open University in Scotland, but driven by the UNITE trade union in Rolls Royce PLC plants in the West of Scotland.* A leading role in the development of the programme was played by Union Learning Reps in the creation of a learning culture on the shop floor with many workers not having engaged in formal education since their original apprenticeships. Union negotiations resulted in an agreement with management to support the programme which is delivered by the OUiS through its traditional supported distance learning environment with workers/learners given additional support at the workplace by the ULRs and peer support structures. The workers all study in their own time although Rolls Royce do fund around 40% of each module with the union providing 40% and the individual contributing the remaining 20%.

4.3. Methodology – interview schedules and interviewees

At the core of each case study stands an analysis of available data, documentary analysis of institutional/organisational websites and documents in the public domain. In addition, a series of interviews were conducted with: relevant stakeholders in partner or collaborating organisations; lecturing staff on the programmes of interest; and, students who matched LETAE criteria.

In order to allow some level of comparability semi-structured interview schedules for each of the three groups of interest (learners, academics, and external partners) were designed to be applied across all cases. The interview schedules were based on instruments developed and successfully applied in the THEMP project, which the present project builds upon in substantive areas involving adult learning and collaboration with external agencies the provision of labour market relevant programmes in higher education.[93]

[93] The interview schedule Is contained in Appendix 1.

Interviews were conducted between July 2014 and March 2015 either by telephone, Skype or face to face and lasted for between 45 minutes and one hour. All interviews were recorded and fully transcribed. The following table provides brief details of the interviewees at each case.

Table 3 **Persons interviewed by case**	
Case 1: B.A. Community Development with Accreditation by CLD Standards Council (Scotland)	Lecturing staff (x1); Placement Coordinator (x1); Placement Provider Manager (x1); Students (x2)
Case 2: F.D. Power Engineering with IET Accreditation	Lecturing staff (x2); Energy Sector Representative (x1) Students (x2)
Case 3 B. Engineering	Lecturing staff (x1); Union Learning Regional Organiser (x1); Worker/learners (x2); Rolls Royce Manager (x1)

5. Description of cases studies drawing on case study reports

5.1. Case 1: BA Community Development (BACD) – CLD Standards Council for Scotland – Local Authority/Third Sector Practice Placements

5.1.1. General information about programme and partnerships

The first of the selected case studies is the *BA in Community Development*[94] delivered by the School of Education at the University of Glasgow and in addition to being subject to the academic regulations of the university it is also accredited as a professional qualification by *the Standards Council for Community Learning and Development (Scotland)*.[95] It is three years in duration and somewhat uniquely at the University of Glasgow entry is not solely based on academic qualifications. As it is a work-based learning programme all applicants must have at least two days per week of paid or unpaid work in the broad field of community development. Applicants with no formal qualifications are encouraged to apply on the premise that they have extensive experience within a community development setting.

> *I looked at it and it needed experience …….. I wrote a statement about my background and my experience and then I was invited for an interview. I did two interviews with Glasgow University before I was allowed onto the course (Learner, female)*

Students may enter into second or third year with advanced standing and possession of a Higher National Certificate (HNC) for second year entry; or a Higher National Diploma (HND) for entry to third year.[96] In addition, student who enter the programme in first year have the option of exiting the programme at the end of first year with Certificate in Higher Education (Cert. HE) or at the end of second year with a Diploma in Higher Education (Dip. HE). At present recruitment is strong to the programme and cohorts average around 25 per year group. Negotiations are currently underway with a view to developing the existing provision to Honours Level.

5.1.2. Brief overview of academic institution

Founded in 1451, the University of Glasgow is the fourth oldest university in the English-speaking world and more than 16,000 undergraduates and 6,000 postgraduates from 120 countries worldwide

[94] http://www.gla.ac.uk/undergraduate/degrees/communitydevelopment/

[95] http://www.cldstandardscouncil.org.uk/Approval_of_training/Courses/PROFESSIONAL-University-of-Glasgow-Undergraduate

[96] HNC and HND are equivalent level qualifications as the Cert. HE and Dip. HE but delivered in Further Education Colleges in Scotland. These are seen as intermediate qualifications within the first cycle of the FQ-EHEA or EQF Level 5 http://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/en/content/descriptors-page

study at the University each year. Whilst one of the world ranked top 100 universities, it also has a commitment to widening participation and access and the School of Education and the Centre for Open Studies[97] has a particular commitment to the provision of adult education through its Open Programme[98] and Access[99] provision.

The School of Education has five RTG[100] (Research Transfer Groups) and is host to a number of important research and development centres (Centre for Research and Development in Adult and Lifelong Learning[101] (CRADALL); the Robert Clark Centre for Educational Change[102]; and, the PASCAL International Observatory[103]). It has a full-time equivalent academic staff of around 90, although this is augmented by a number of part-time and associate tutors. Staff come from a mixture of practice and academic backgrounds very much related to area or discipline. It is home to a full-time equivalent of around 1200 students although many study part-time in the evening and at weekends. It delivers around 30 undergraduate and postgraduate programmes and also delivers a range of CPD (Continuing Professional Development) and non-credit bearing courses. Core funding is from the Scottish Executive and course fee income with an increasing push for full fee international postgraduate students.

As noted above, the selected programme in addition to its academic qualification is also accredited by the professional regulatory agency in the field. *The Standards Council for Community Learning and Development for Scotland*[104] is the professional body for those working in community learning and development. The responsibilities of the CLD Standards Council are to: deliver a professional approvals structure for qualifications, courses and development opportunities for everyone involved in CLD; consider and establish a registration system available to practitioners delivering and active in CLD practice; and to develop and establish a model of supported induction, CPD and training opportunities.

Under its agreement with the Scottish Government its focus (in terms of outputs and outcomes) is identified as: improving life chances for people of all ages, through learning, personal development and active citizenship; and, building stronger, more resilient, supportive, influential and inclusive communities.[105]

[97] http://www.gla.ac.uk/services/centreforopenstudies/

[98] http://www.gla.ac.uk/courses/openstudies/

[99] http://www.gla.ac.uk/courses/openstudies/accessprogramme/#d.en.196535

[100] http://www.gla.ac.uk/schools/education/research/researchgroups/

[101] http://cradall.org/

[102] http://www.gla.ac.uk/schools/education/robertowencentre/#d.en.294931

[103] http://pascalobservatory.org/pascalnow

[104] http://www.cldstandardscouncil.org.uk/CLD_Standards_Council/CLD_Standards_Council

[105] http://www.cldstandardscouncil.org.uk/About_CLD/About_CLD_

5.1.3. Brief overview of collaborating partner

The selected placement organisation is Kingsway Court Health & Wellbeing Centre[106] which is a community development centre set up and managed by local people for local people to help improve the quality of their life and their community. Its vision is one of *a proud, capable and confident multi-cultural community*; and its mission is to build social capital within the community. As such it can be said to be fairly representative of organisations within which students on the programme of interest may be placed to demonstrate the practical competences required, or within which they may already employed or volunteering. It can trace its roots back to the Kingsway Tenants Association but as the area within which it is located changed so too did the needs of the community which changed from predominantly white working class, to a multi-ethnic community as a result of it becoming a dispersal centre for refugees and migrants.

> *The arrival in Kingsway of hundreds of, mainly destitute, refugees from around the World was yet another ingredient added to the broth of multiple-deprivation afflicting the area. In the main, local residents welcomed the refugees and offered support. However, fuelled by media propaganda and the sheer multi-cultural mix, there was a great need to address racial tensions. Promoting integration became a constant thread of the Centre's work.*[107]

It provides a range of service and support forums to the local community including Welfare Advice, Computer Clubs, Language courses, and mother and toddler and pensioner clubs and also a community gardening initiative. It also operates a Credit Union providing access to banking and credit facilities and financial education and offers counselling and support services.

How and in what ways did the collaboration/partnership/programme develop and evolve?

As perhaps befits its aims, teaching style and ethos, the origins of the programme can be seen as developing organically in response to a perceived need in the sector.

> *'It was, the very first impetus I suppose was, came from unqualified community work assistants and they were mainly in the Community Development Department of the Social Work Department and it was council workers. So they were getting leave to go on course and they were trying to, the council were behind it because they all wanted their workers to be fully qualified. So the bulk of the students were coming from that kinda background. And also, they also gave us a secondment of a community development worker to come and do some of the practise teaching on it. This is the very, very beginning. I'm talking about, you know, like eighteen years ago. And then we moved*

[106] http://www.kingswayhealth.co.uk/

[107] http://www.kingswayhealth.co.uk/about-us/location-and-background/

from that to expanding to other kinds of organisations. So we then had the voluntary sector coming in and it was very much the employer would either pay for the fees or pay for the support and there would have to be a negotiation for them to release the student for one and a half days. And then as time goes on, you know, there are much more, a much more diverse group of organisations in community development now to include things like asylum seekers support and, you know...' (Lecturer, female)

The provision of courses which are designed in collaboration with external partners and which have a requirement of the inclusion of a significant amount of practice from year one are rare at Glasgow; and it could be that in its present format of 60% academic input and assessment and 40% practice input assessment throughout the undergraduate programme it is unique. This is perhaps to be expected given its reputation as a prestigious world class research institution.

What, role, do work-based/-related programmes/courses play in the academic institution?

With the exception of Teaching and Nursing, many of the placements and internships elsewhere in the university are more likely to be available during the summer vacation, or as a result of taking a year out before returning to university for a final year. Examples of this type of provision may be found in Chemistry and Life Sciences; while short practice placements (8 weeks; 6 hours per week) are available in Social and Public Policy undergraduate programmes. Much of that type of provision can and is used as an entry route to graduate level employment with the organisation the placement was undertaken. In addition, many of the placement opportunities are at post-graduate level and in many cases are voluntary rather than a built in component and necessary for professional accreditation in the case of Community Development (and as noted Nursing and Teaching).

What, role, do work-based/-related programmes/courses play in the organisation?

In relation to the placement organisations education and training are seen as crucial in order for them to be able to provide comprehensive support and information to the client groups that they work with. As noted above this can involve dealing with a variety of issues and problems depending on the client group and their specific needs. For example in the current economic crisis the cuts to welfare benefits and cuts in public services have meant a large part of the caseload is concerned with trying to help and support claimants to ensure they have robust and accurate information; a second group which has increased in importance in the sector over recent years are migrant groups who have quite different but crucial support needs in relation to asylum, citizenship and benefits and support which they might be entitled to.

5.1.4. The case study programme/course

Interviews were conducted with all three stakeholder groups and brief details of their background appear in the table below:

Table 4 **Background of interviewed Persons – Case 1**		
Learners	Academic representative	External stakeholders
Male, early 40s, working class, background in creative industries, needed a change of career direction and had an interest in youth work	*Lecturer, female, early 50s, previous employment in sector prior to academic career*	*Manager of Placement organisation. Early 50s, male, working class background*
Female, late 50s, long-term community volunteer, ethnic minority background	*Placement coordinator, female, mid 30s,*	

The programme operates on a compressed model of attendance with one full day at university and 0.5 days on placement. It utilises a group work approach as appropriate for its focus on inclusion and empowerment. Some elements of traditional lecture style but minimal to facilitate group work and interaction. The course is supported by a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) – Moodle - allowing an element of blended learning. There are strong elements of work-based learning reinforced through assessed placements. Students are required to undertake a practice based/focused project in their final year.

Table 5 **Programme Structure– Case 1**		
Year 1 – 1.5 days per week	Year 2 – 1.5 days per week	Year 3 – 1 day per week (plus 12-16 hours of practice)
Content		
Community development and social action models; Local and global contexts; Practice methodology for community development and social action; Social theories 1; Transformational practice. Plus: 450 hours placement	Lifelong learning and social change; Empowerment strategies and practice models ; Organisation, planning and evaluation; Critical practice for empowerment; Social theories 2; Critical practice. Plus: 450 hours placement	Social theories 3 Research methods Research project 300 hours Practice placement. Plus 250 hours placement

Assessment has to meet with university regulations in terms of matching assessment to learning outcomes and aims and objectives. Assessments are a mix of group work, presentations, placements assessments, essays and a final year project. Assessment is based on 60% academic work and 40% on practice based assessment on placement. The practice placement supervisor assesses the professional competences of the students in conjunction with academic assignments which are based on reflections of practice experience. Assessment is marked according to the university grading system. Credits at each level, are based on the SCQF which allows translation in to ECTS points. Each module in the programme is generally worth 20 Credits, although the project is worth 40 Credits. There is inherent flexibility in entry and exit routes:

> *So you can come in in first year and you do your certificate, and, you know, for a variety of reasons that'll be enough for somebody, you know, circumstances, that's it. … Next year then they can go in, do their second year, and they can exit with their diploma, or they can go and complete the final year and exit with their ordinary degree…. we work very closely with, …….. (local FE colleges) who all run the Working in Communities HNC. So some students will choose to come straight into first year, if they're ready and they've got the right practice opportunities, but others, it's just, will take the next step, which is going into FE. So we work very closely with our colleagues in the FE sector and, so then they go and they do their HNC and they can come into second year.(Lecturer, female)*

5.1.5. Programme evaluation

Specifically in relation to programme evaluation, the course and programme team use standard university evaluation methods and students will also complete the National Student Survey the result of which are used as important indictors of the student experience. There are also recognised and formal methods and processes to allow student representatives to engage with academic staff on an on-going basis to bring issues and problems to the attention of academic and administrative staff. In addition:

> *at the end of, at the end of third year we say to the student, the student evaluates the whole programme. We do that ourselves, and we'll use creative ways and methods for them to do that, but we say "thinking of your learning journey," you know, "evaluate the programme" and stuff like that "across the three years." And that's really helpful for us, because they've had that journey, and a lot of the things they'll say we'll try to implement, where we think it's practical and possible. Now, the big thing has been, you know, the peer assessing, their assessing, but awarding a grade, so students in third year are awarding each other assessment grades. (Lecturer, female)*

In addition, the underlying ethos of the course in terms of transformative change and issues of equity and social justice was recognised and appreciated by the learners:

> *But the fact if you're teaching a social equality, social justice, and empowerment course and the actual format of the course is then doing it at the same time. For me that was really, really encouraging (Learner, Male)*

Specifically in relation to the practice element

> *… we also assess the students in practice, so we do an assessed observation. So that's another opportunity to come out and see the student, and they're doing their stuff with the groups and the people that they're working with…… and at the same time we ask the supervisor to submit a midway progress report, and it's just about saying "so where do you think the students at?"… you know, "how do you think they're managing and coping with the work?" …and stuff like that. "Is there any issues or concerns you have?" So the supervisor will submit that at the same time. from the academic point of view the supervisor's report could influence whether a student would pass or fail the programme. So they have quite an active part to play, which is really encouraged by the Standards Council as well, to be honest. (Lecturer, female)*

5.1.6. Programme Impact

The following comments draw upon the interview transcripts and provide some indication of the impact on learners and also on the placement organisations. The first quote is from a lecturer on the programme and notes the added value that the degree provides in terms of practice competences

> *…… it's really good for the students, because the students, normally they get, you know, the qualification from the university, you know, saying academically they're a student and that they're capable, but it's also saying the field, the professional, you know, endorsement of the field is acknowledging that they're also professionally, you know, competent as well, which you know is brilliant (Lecturer, Female)*

The second illustrates the social justice element which draws many of the learners to the course and also points out links between placement elements and linkages to possible future employment.

> *So, it's not only me as an individual who is benefiting ……It's not only the workplace benefits, and also the people ….. that I'm working with within the community benefit…..And I hopefully .. intend to have a development role as soon as I leave university… . within the same organisation ….. Yeah, and I'll be the most accredited*

> *person within that organisation, and that's not to discredit anyone that's—there's other people with diplomas in other… But in terms of a Glasgow University degree, I will be the most accredited person, and yet, probably the most naïve in terms of (laugh) of what actually works on the job (Learner, Male, early 40s)*

A common theme in many of the learners and which is also recognised by academic staff is the possible impact on work/study/life balance:

> *… I've had to wake up in the middle of the night two hours a week for weeks leading up to my assignments, to be able to do my assignments. The work/life balance just became really challenging and then the job that I was doing, the... the work practice that I was doing turned into a job in the summer of this year and, however, they were keen for me to carry on with the job – which is a five day job – in three days because obviously I'm at university for one day and doing another piece of work. And it wasn't a very good environment to carry on .. (Learner, female)*

Despite these difficulties the learner was able to readjust her situation and successfully continue with the programme and will graduate this summer; and as the following quote shows not all the impact was negative:

> *… it was fantastic for me because I needed to have something tangible that I could work with and something that I could develop in because I'd never worked in that group thing. So, yes, it was very good for me. It was good for my development but it was also good for me to know that by the time I left at least I'd left something with the group. (Learner, female)*

In addition to the above, learners often mentioned increased self-confidence and self-esteem as a result of participation in the programme and as the literature suggest this is a commonly cited impact for non-traditional entrants to higher education.

The final quotes on impact come from the placement manager; and are just one of the many positive examples of a positive impact on the placement setting. The first notes the impact of an individual placement; while the second perhaps is representative of how the placement student can allow things to happen that would not have without them:

> *Quite often you'll have a student come here with a... a desire or a particular interest that they want to work on. They have to do some work with asylum seekers and refugees …Or we've had a lassie out here who's an occupational therapist. Cracking placement, that was. One of the best placements, I would think. She come out to consider the role of an*

occupational therapist in a community health setting. …. she was here for twelve weeks. ….a completely new perspective on community development for me ……..…

I need that work done there for, you know, you come in and do it and I'm not having to pay them for it….. They're getting a bit of experience …. intensive supervision to make sure that they're not fucking up or messing somebody's heid up. … But there is... I can turn round at the end of the year and go "We delivered on that, that and that" and I was only able to deliver because I had James in there or a Jenny or whoever else. So I do get something out it but it's... It takes up a lot of my time. ..to manage them….. (Placement manager, Male)

5.1.7. Case summary

What do we learn from this case study with respect to project targets?

This programme provides a good example of how higher education can provide a route to professionalization for under-qualified staff in the sector and as such is directly related to the project aims. Key drivers are issues of social justice, empowerment and positive change in people's lives and communities. It is delivered by a team with close personal connections with, and networks in, the sector which have grown in an almost organic way and this feeds back in to the course in a sustainable way:

…. just this morning we had two students, or two former students who are now, they're now going to be placement supervisors for a couple of students. So two graduates are now in the position that within the organisations that they work to now supervise other students

What are the lessons for designing and implementing such programmes in other institutions and in other countries?

In order for provision such as this to be main-streamed, it needs to clearly identify a need in collaboration and partnership with external stakeholders. But the success shows that with appropriate teaching and learning strategies students can be developed to a professional standard; even for those starting with low, or no formal entry qualifications or recent experience of formal learning environments and contexts. In relation to collaboration we can see an almost organic evolution with highly committed academic staff with real-life practice experience involved in the conception and implementation of the programme. The case also shows the importance of accreditation of WBL and

the development of close contacts between the staff delivering the programme and the regulatory body which oversees the sector

How can such programmes be improved and implemented effectively?

It is argued that one of the highlights of this programme that should be noted for those wishing to improve their own provision and of crucial importance to any WBL provision is the process of ongoing development undertaken in conjunction with external stakeholders; which means provision is subject to updating and improvement and processes are in place to allow it to claim to be responsive to both student and external stakeholder feedback. The programme is designed to allow both the transfer of knowledge and the co-creation of knowledge through the use of group work, interactive sessions and reflections on practice; and as we have seen, provides a clear connection between the more theoretical academic world and the hands-on context of practice which should be a central concern of any effective WBL.

Finally for this case we present a quote which we believe truly captures the transformative potential of the programme and its impact on one learner's life:

> *What I would say though is that I personally have found … I've found the… a vocation in life. I have found what I'm going to be doing for the rest of my life. And I have truly through the course and theorists and the theory, and the working, and where I am. I've really found validation again in what I'm doing is right. How I felt all along about society and how to be, play a part in it, real validation. (Learner, male, early 40s)*

5.2. Case 2: Bachelor in Engineering (Hons.) UNITE Trade Union – Open University in Scotland – Rolls Royce

5.2.1. General information about programme

The programme of interest is the B.Eng. (Hons.)[108] delivered by the Open University in Scotland (OUiS)[109] in conjunction with the UNITE[110] Trade Union at two of the industrial plants of power systems company Rolls Royce[111] in Scotland at East Kilbride and Inchinnan. The programme, like all OU provision is delivered by distance learning supplemented by optional tutorial groups, online forums and student peer support groups. Due to the nature of the course and the flexibility built into all OU programmes, it is hard to put a figure in relation to duration, as learner/workers may revise their academic load (number of credit rated modules) depending upon personal circumstances and work-life balance. At the present time – the OUiS has delivered more than 233 modules, to 65 students over the lifetime of the programme with a split between the two plants as follows: East Kilbride 135 modules by 38 students; and at Inchinnan 98 modules have been delivered to 27 students. Currently, around 40 workers are currently involved in the programme. The main constraints on access to the programme are financial with the programme financed in a tripartite manner with the learner/worker paying around 20% of each module cost, while the remaining 80% is split between the trade union and the employers.[112] Financing is finite in each year thereby imposing some potential limitations on recruitment to the programmes.

5.2.2. Brief overview of academic institution

The Open University in Scotland (OUiS) is a National Centre of the Open University (OU) founded in the late 1960s with specific responsibility for the provision of higher educational opportunities to those unable to access traditional provision. It is truly Open Access and a leading global player in distance learning.

> *The OU was founded to open up higher education to all, regardless of their circumstances or where they live. We have students of all ages and backgrounds: school students wanting experience of university-level study, school leavers who choose to begin their careers while*

[108] http://www.open.ac.uk/courses/qualifications/q65#

[109] http://www.open.ac.uk/scotland/

[110] http://www.unitetheunion.org/default.aspx

[111] http://www.rolls-royce.com/

[112] The degree programme is funded through a Collective Learning Fund, with contributions from Rolls-Royce, Skills Development Scotland and the learners themselves.

> *they study for a degree, people wanting to develop or update their skills, or change career entirely, and retired people wanting to explore new interests and keep mentally active.*[113]

They are a leading brand in distance learning not only nationally but globally. They operate what might be seen as 'true' open access (although in some instances funding may be a barrier or constraint) and have been in the forefront of developments in the delivery of high quality technologically sophisticated distance learning. A major attraction of the OUiS is the quality of its support and its ability to have true open access within a supportive learning environment which allows learners often with little or no recent formal learning at tertiary level to succeed.[114]

It could be argued that the provision of the OUiS and the OU in general, and also specifically the programmes and area of focus in the case study align closely with LETAE criteria and aims. In recent years as noted below it has developed links and expanded its provision in the areas of work-based and work related learning.

5.2.3. Brief overview of the collaboration and partnership

UNITE the Union is Britain's biggest union with 1.42 million members in every type of workplace.[115]

> *It is a democratic and campaigning union which fights for employees in the workplace, is taking trade unionism out to the millions of unorganised workers, and is a union that stands up for equality for all and advances its members interests politically.*

It was formed as a result of mergers: a merger between the AEEU and MSF created Amicus, which was followed by mergers with Unifi and the GPMU. In 2007, Amicus merged with the Transport and General Workers Union to form Unite the union. Unite is active on a global scale building links with trade unions around the world to confront the challenges of the globalised economy.[116] It is also innovative in that it now actively recruits among the community and has devised a specific membership model to adopt with those not currently in employment.[117]

> *Unite's mission is to organise people to strive for a society that places equality, dignity and respect above all else. But our union recognises that we can only achieve this if we bring people together from all walks of life. Even now in the 21st century, too many people in our*

[113] http://www.open.ac.uk/about/main/the-ou-explained/the-ous-mission

[114] http://www.open.ac.uk/about/main/strategy/teaching-learning-ou

[115] http://www.unitetheunion.org/growing-our-union/about-us/

[116] http://www.unitetheunion.org/unite-at-work/international/workersuniting/

[117] As a result of participation in the project links are being made between UNITE community learning section and members of Case Study 1 with a view to possible collaborations and partnerships in the area of CLD.

> *country are being pushed to the margins of society. They deserve to be heard; they too deserve the support to organise collectively. It is with this in mind that Unite has founded its community membership scheme.*[118]

The enterprise where the selected case study programme is delivered is Rolls Royce Holdings PLC[119] a global company perhaps best known for the production and maintenance of jet engines for the aeronautics sector. They also produce low emission power systems for marine applications and provide power plants for a range of vehicles from trains to combine harvesters. They can trace their history back to 1884 with the formation of the elite car manufacturing company founded by Charles Rolls and Henry Royce. Their entry into the airplane industry started with military applications in 1914 when Royce designed his first aero engine *providing some half of the total horsepower used in the air war by the allies*. In 1944 it developed gas turbine aero engines and in 1953 entered the civil aviation sector where it has remained as a leader in the field and a major supplier to the major commercial airplane industry.[120]

How and in what ways did the collaboration/partnership/programme develop and evolve?

The main drivers for the creation of learning opportunities for shop floor workers in Rolls Royce which led to the collaboration with Open University in Scotland and the development of the B.Eng degree were the trade unions. The trade union decided it wanted to develop a learning programme at the plant.

> *We engaged with the employer (Rolls Royce) and we negotiated a learning agreement that set parameters and how we were going to do it …. The site shop stewards committees, … made the decision that all the shop stewards could take up the union learning rep role … to give it credence ….develop a learning culture that, if you're elected as a convenor, you would have to train as a union learning rep so you could understand the agenda and drive it. We made the learning and training part of the collective bargaining structure (UNITE rep)*

In 2006 the programme had developed and a learning culture had begun to spread amongst the workers and courses were organised to fit around workers shift patterns and included courses in IT, Spanish and Sign Language. But both the workers and the ULRs wanted to expand and develop provision

[118] http://www.unitetheunion.org/growing-our-union/communitymembership/

[119] http://www.rolls-royce.com/about.aspx

[120] http://www.rolls-royce.com/~/media/Files/R/Rolls-Royce/documents/investors/results/archive/at-a-glance-feb-2014.pdf

> *Aye. So we, 2007, round about 2007, we started just to look at it and we started getting more of a demand from our workforce. They had moved, we had put progression paths in place for IT. We were doing 'Using Computers' stage one, stage two….. some of them went on to European Computer Driving Licence, they done PC Passport, they had done Spanish, we'd done sign language – but then the eyes started to get honed to more vocational qualifications. And we identified that a lot of our members had hit a glass ceiling in regards to their substantive role with the employer. The employer wouldn't train or upskill them or develop them because the business need didn't require them to do that. What we found was that there was a lot of guys wanted, we looked at, 'right, ok, we've got a bit of social learning going, we've got a bit of IT learning – how can we, then, get our members into higher and further education for the higher education, further education?'*

It was at this stage that the union started to engage with OUiS who were brought in to undertake a learning audit, interviewed all workers to understand the level of interest and demand for higher level learning opportunities and produced a report.

> *They fed that back to the union learning rep committee and it told us that there was a commonality of interest in, predominantly, in engineering and that would be on the B.Eng of the Open University.*

The next step was to engage with the employers and enter into a formal agreement over how exactly it would work and what commitments were made by the union the employers and the individual workers.

What, role, do work-based/-related programmes/courses play in the academic institution?

As noted earlier collaboration will be in part dependent upon programme but there is collaboration between university and other stakeholders and in the case of employer and community engagement the initiative may be from stakeholders as in the case of this case study whereby the initiative was driven forward very much by the UNITE trade union and their Learning Reps. It has developed links and partnerships with local authority provision in areas of social care and social work and a number of programmes in the areas outlined above attract a considerable number of students who match the LETAE criteria in terms of age and career progression aspirations. The shift in focus from 'supplying graduates' and to engaging more directly with work-based and work-related learning through the

development of work based modules and qualifications is documented by Cannell and MacIntyre.[121] In addition to commenting on the case study selected here, they also note other links to the trade union movement through a formal memorandum of understanding with the Scottish Trades Union Council to further develop effective and sustainable work based learning opportunities.

What role does education and training play in relation to the organisation(s)?

Lifelong learning and education for their members is of major importance to UNITE and they offer a range of flexible learning opportunities to their members. One indicator of the importance placed on education is the creation of a Virtual Learning Platform; Learn with Unite[122] which provides members with access to a range of accredited courses. In addition, they also provide opportunities through Unite Education[123] which offers access to courses on a regional basis and which is where members who wish to represent and support their fellow members in an official capacity as branch officials; or by training as a workplace, safety, equality or learning representative.

As noted elsewhere the driving force behind the development of the case study programme was the Union Learning Reps (ULR). Each Rep must successfully complete a two stage learning programme in order to be recognised as a ULR. The course at both Stage 1[124] and Stage 2[125] entail 5 days learning and the key aims are to provide ULRs with the skills and competences to: undertake the role of a competent ULR; promote learning & skills; facilitate quality learning opportunities; and, organise in the workplace around learning issues.

> *The ULRs play a critical role in enhancing the mainstream OU support model and sit outside the normal employee/employer or learner/provider relationships. Along with students who have already embarked on the degree pathway the ULRs play a critical role in encouraging and clarifying commitments for new students. This additional relationship provides a safety net for participants. Cannell and MacIntyre, 2013: p4)*

They note in particular the role that ULRs play in addition to the learning support provided by the OUiS when learners have some sort of problem, for example issues around funding; or pastoral support relating to the balance of work and study.

While this is based in Rolls Royce, it is not part of the organisations formal training schemes or provision; and it is only in operation as a result of the bargaining agreements carried out at a local

[121] Cannell, P. and Macintyre, R. (2013) Reflections on work and learning and flexible curriculum. Enhancement and innovation in Higher Education, QAA, Glasgow. http://www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/docs/paper/reflections-on-work-and-learning-and-flexible-curriculum.pdf?sfvrsn=6

[122] http://www.learnwithunite.org/

[123] http://www.unitetheunion.org/growing-our-union/education/

[124] https://www.unionlearn.org.uk/courses/union-learning-representatives-ulr-stage-1-award

[125] https://www.unionlearn.org.uk/courses/union-learning-representatives-ulr-stage-2-award

level. The company do however have a training programme with career opportunities in: Advanced/Modern Apprenticeships with Technical, Practical and Specialist Science options;[126] and Higher Apprenticeships with Supply Chain Management Project Analyst/Controller, Engineering and Manufacturing Engineering[127] (a similar qualification as offered by UNITE to its members) options. In addition it offers Internships and Graduate Development Programme.[128]

5.2.4. The case study programme/course

Table 6 Background of interviewed Persons – Case 2		
Learners	Academic representative	External stakeholders
Male, Non-Destructive Testing Inspector, 7 years with Rolls Royce, Union Learning Rep, late 30s	*Male, Engineering background, 24 years with Open University, Academic tutor, Associate lecturer and consultant, mid 60s*	*Male, UNITE Regional Learning Organiser, previous Rolls Royce employee prior to full-time union career, late 30s*
Male, Inspector on B2-500 engine project, 24 years with Rolls Royce, Union Learning Rep, mid 40s		*Male, joined Rolls Royce as apprentice from school, Production Manager, 18 years with Rolls Royce, mid 30s*

As with all Open University award bearing provision, the degree is delivered by distance learning on a modular basis. The degree has three stages, each comprising 120 credits (equivalent to one year's full-time university study in Scotland). Stage 1 provides the underpinning knowledge and skills needed for more advanced study at Stages 2 and 3. In relation to the duration of the course, in the case study, learners are strongly advised due to work and family commitments to commit to only 60 credits per year which would mean 6 years to graduation. However some of the learners will have been able to achieve recognition for prior learning which might mean that credit transfer could be used to replace credit usually at Stage 1.

> *Most have them have got the IT skills that are necessary in the first place, 'cause they need them in the workplace. A lot of them, they come in with something like an HNC under their belt, anyway, so they've got the basic maths understanding and stuff that's needed (Associate tutor, Male)*

The following table provides some details of the structure of the selected programme.

[126] http://www.rolls-royce.com/careers/students-and-graduates/apprenticeships/advanced-modern-apprenticeships.aspx

[127] http://www.rolls-royce.com/careers/students-and-graduates/apprenticeships/higher-apprenticeships.aspx

[128] http://www.rolls-royce.com/careers/students-and-graduates/graduate-programmes.aspx

Table 7 **Programme Structure – Case 2**			
Stage 1 – 120 Credits			
Compulsory Modules 30 credits		Optional Modules 30 credits	
Engineering the future (T174)	Engineering: professions, practice and skills 1 (T176)	*Either* Discovering mathematics (MU123) and Essential mathematics 1 (MST124)	*or* Essential mathematics 1 (MST124) and Essential mathematics 2 (MST125)
Stage 2		Stage 3	
A compulsory module – 60 Credits; then	Choose a route and then two compulsory modules (30 credits each): Engineering Design; Energy and Sustainability; Environmental technologies; Mathematical Methods	One compulsory module in chosen route (60 credits)	Two compulsory modules in chosen route (30 credits each)

In addition to the academic work done in the learners own time – there are enhanced support mechanisms in place in addition to the high standard of support which the OU is known for. Learners benefit from one to one, face to face session with tutors within the workplace, group tutorial work carried out at the Glasgow Caledonian University on a Saturday morning, peer support groups within the workplace and Union Learning Rep support within the workplace.

It is suggested that these support mechanisms go some way to ensuring a high retention rate with drop out of students on the course significantly lower than normal Open University courses.

5.2.5. Programme evaluation

The programme is subject to evaluation by all partners although each will take a slightly different focus. The OUiS will evaluate the programme content and its delivery in terms of satisfaction of students and as such it will be evaluated like any other academic provision delivered by the Open University. There will be formal feedback mechanisms and also clear channels of communication

between learners and academic administration and support. The Open University is regularly voted in the top 3 student satisfaction in the National Student Survey (NSS).

Unite, through its ULRs have a comprehensive evaluation and monitoring process in place much of it to ensure that learner members are progressing but also to ensure that appropriate and relevant mentoring and peer support can be put into place.

One of the successes of the model was its ability to operate in plants with multiple shift patterns and work sections and this was recognised by management:

> *We had developed a workplace delivery model that could be delivered at a shift-friendly time, workload demands, etc., and there was benefit there. And they, to be fair, at the plant, recognised that. (Union Learning Organiser, Male)*

Despite the fact that this is a union led initiative Rolls Royce as an employer and funder of the programme will wish to see how and in what ways the programme facilitates the potential redeployment of learners and its place within local plant HR training and development activities.

In addition, to the evaluation activities noted above for each partner, progress of the programme is also monitored by a Steering Group consisting of Unite Learning Organiser, the Open University Lead Tutors, Open University Business Manager, Rolls-Royce HR Business Partner and Rolls-Royce Production Leader. This Steering Group is a further opportunity/avenue of support for learners/workers/members where any issues with the programme are managed.

5.2.6. Programme Impact

In relation to the impact of the programme the first quote perhaps provides some of the rationale underlying Rolls Royce's support for the programme delivery to its employees (and union members)

> *But at the end of the day, I mean, the company, I think, have come round to realising what they've got is a model that will deliver some graduates for them at less cost than anything else that's going on. It's got some workplace support aspect to it, it's got a commitment to the individuals and, you know, so I think that they can see that there's something emerging out of this that's quite different. (Male, Academic Tutor)*

In addition, the design and structure of the programme and the collaborative nature of it has been used as a model by the UNITE and the OU in Scotland for developing a similar form of programme in other sectors and organisations.

The following quote reflects on the learning culture that was created and developed as a result of the union learning initiative which can be seen as a general impact of the programme

> *I see it going on with a lot of the cohorts, a lot of individuals who's taking learning, they buddy up, they help each other. I think people seem more confident that when they've got a problem they come and ask us …. and encourage managers to become the mentor for these individuals and at that, once that happens there would probably be a more full integration. (Learner, Male, late 30s)*

However, as with learners on other case study programmes there is often a negative impact and while it may be short-term it provides a reflection of the commitment that full-time employees make to increase and develop their own skill on a voluntary basis.

> *Sometimes you haven't the energy or the inclination. Other times you don't have the time and then there's times when you, I mean it's, there can be days where both me and Brian will sit in front of a computer all day and then we have to go home and sit in front of a computer again. Do you know what I mean? (Learner, Male, mid 40s)*

The final quote in this section provides evidence of a major impact on an individual's career through participation and successfully completing his degree and also illustrates the wider impact of the programme on the shop-floor:

> *There's been guys that have taken up other roles – both on the shop floor, taken on more roles within their teams on the shop floor. There's guys also moved into technical functions. And actually, one of our members who's actually now completed his degree – he was the first guy to complete his engineering degree – has actually transfer… there was a redundancy at Inchinnan, there, but he mitigated the threat of redundancy for himself because he moved to Canada, Rolls Royce Canada – got a job, a technical job in Rolls Royce Canada and that was on the back of his studies, as well. (Male, Union Learning Organiser)*

5.2.7. Case summary

What do we learn from this case study with respect to project targets?

It is suggested that this case study is an interesting illustration of how a bottom up approach driven by the Trade Union can lead to the introduction of high quality learning opportunities for worker/learners. Of specific importance was the creation and development of a learning culture within the plants. The approach started with providing what could be termed as 'leisure' learning, driven in part by member's demands, in relation to language and IT courses and to then build on that success to offer more substantial and academic work-based/-related learning. This strategy built workers

confidence in terms of returning to learning for many who had little engagement with formal learning since their apprenticeship and successful completion of these courses provided them with a recognition of their ability to learn and a recognition that the 'learning model' worked.

In relation to meeting the LETAE criteria it is suggested that the programme of interest is a useful model and example of the type of programme that aims to help adults and older workers up-date and increase skill and competences in order for them to progress in their chosen field of employment. While not specifically WBL it is suggested that there are obvious transfers between study and employment though work-related learning.

What are the lessons for designing and implementing such programmes in other institutions and in other countries?

The programme has attracted interest both nationally and abroad with a delegation from Sweden visiting the sites to learn of the programme to see what could be learned from the model and if it could be adapted to the Swedish context. It is suggested that one of the most important elements leading to the success of this model was the creation of a learning culture in the plants prior to expanding and increasing the level of provision on offer. It is also important to allow learners to test the water in terms of work-based and work-related learning as many will have little or no recent or relevant experience of study at this level.

As noted in the review or WBL one of the key factors has been the development and funding of the tripartite funding model whereby all partners and stakeholders contribute proportionately to the costs of the provision. It is suggested that in order to be transferable, funding streams would need to be identified and the state would probably be required to contribute significantly in order to convince employers to engage with the process.

How can such programmes be improved and implemented effectively?

The programme is largely dependent upon trust and collective bargaining and negotiated learning agreements. It is difficult to see how the model as it stands could be applied in places where trade unions did not have a presence. At present the funding is relatively short term and in this case a major improvement would be sustainable funding streams which like the current model did not place too onerous a burden to prospective participants. A major issue which would make a difference in relation to work/life/study balance but is unlikely to be adopted is additional time off for learners. Although some support for the residential week is provided; learners also have to use a portion of their holiday allocation to take part. This might be considered a burden too great for employers to bear.

5.3: Case 3: Foundation Degree in Electrical Power Engineering – Aston University/UHI – Scottish and Southern Energy

5.3.1. Brief overview of case programme:

The programme of interest is a Foundation Degree[129] delivered by Aston University[130] (in Scotland the first year of the programme is delivered by the University of the Highlands and Islands[131] (UHI)) in collaboration with the UK energy sector and for the purposes of this cases study we concentrate on the collaboration and partnership with SSE (Scottish and Southern Energy). Recruitment to the programme is through application to the university – however, potential applicants must be working in the industry so in practical terms the company also recruits directly to the programme through its Trainee Engineer Scheme.[132] The programme has averaged around 100 students/employees per year, although changes in the industry and sector mean that numbers may contract to around 60 per year, but with this number remaining constant over the next 7-10 years All students are in full employment throughout their period of study which enables the University to utilise their work experiences within the learning process. Students are selected by their respective companies either from staff in existing, full-time roles or from new recruits into company training schemes using the University's recommended entry requirements.

> *For 2011 entry at Aston, the age profile ran from 19-55, with an average age of 27. Some candidates gained entry by means of their practical experience and may not have undertaken formal study for some years, while approximately 15% of the students had completed a science or engineering first or post-graduate degree in the previous five years.*[133]

In terms of employment level the programme sits between more traditional type apprenticeships and graduate trainee schemes. The course is accredited by the Institution of Engineering and Technology[134] (IET) for the purposes of meeting the educational requirements of Incorporated Engineer (IEng) registration.

[129] This is an intermediate qualification within the first cycle of the FQ-EHEA or EQF Level 5 http://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/en/content/descriptors-page

[130] http://www.aston.ac.uk/

[131] http://www.uhi.ac.uk/en

[132] http://sse.com/careers/trainees/

[133] Lukes, S. (2013) Aston University Work Based Provision for the UK Electrical Power Industry. UALL Conference, Middlesex. Page 7

[134] http://www.theiet.org/academics/accreditation/synopsis-accred-list.cfm?http://www.theiet.org/academics/accreditation/synopsis-accred-list.cfm

5.3.2. Brief overview of academic institution:

Founded in 1895 and a University since 1966, Aston University is based in Birmingham and has around 9,500 students with a relatively diverse population in terms of ethnic background with only 40% of the students identified as 'White' and sees itself as a research led institution with strong links to business and industry. In addition to the usual range of undergraduate and post—graduate provision, it also works with both the public and private sectors to develop tailored Foundation Degree programmes. Then selected case study is one of the programmes in this area although progression routes from the Foundation Degree to Bachelors and Masters level is possible. According to an internal case study report the development of collaborations and employer engagement in this area has had an important impact on the institution:

> *The Electrical Power Engineering Foundation Degree has resulted in recruitment of additional academic and support staff with power engineering specialisms and the establishment of a new subject group – Electrical, Electronic and Power Engineering with a new research group, Power Electronics and Power Engineering (PEPERG), established within it. PEPERG has already obtained approx. £1.6M research funding since its inception in the spring of 2010, and is continuing to seek further growth around its expertise and resources.*[135]

In addition, the first year of the course is also delivered in Scotland by the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI)[136] which caters for Scottish recruits to the programme. UHI was granted taught degree awarding powers in 2008 and granted full university status in 2011 and is based in Inverness in the north east of Scotland. It is partnership of 13 independent colleges and research that provides access to study at further and higher education across the Highlands and Islands; with around 7500 students with full-time students concentrated in Inverness. It operates a distributed campus model and uses technology to allow it to stream provision synchronously to different units or centres which comprise the institution. This allows students on the same programme to be taught in different dispersed locations which enabling the provision of a wider range of courses to a wider range of the catchment area.

5.3.3. Brief overview of collaborating partner

The collaborating partner that we will focus on in this case study is SSE (Scottish and Southern Energy) a major player in the utilities sector and with interests in the production, distribution and supply of energy including electricity and gas.[137] The company can trace its roots back to 1943 and the

[135] Aston University Employer Engagement Case Study, (p. 6) Internal document supplied by author

[136] http://www.uhi.ac.uk/en

[137] http://sse.com/media/252215/ourbusinessexplained_providingenergy.jpg

generation and supply of hydro power in Scotland and by the mid- 960s, Scotland could boast of 56 dams connected by over 600km of rock tunnel, aqueducts and pipelines which had a major impact in providing mains electricity to the most remote areas of Scotland. SSE has an ownership interest in five economically-regulated energy network companies (making it Britain's second largest energy supplier) and are also involved in market-based networks activity through lighting services, utility solutions and telecoms businesses. It also operates a research and development arm with interests in:` low carbon technologies; smart cities, smart grids, smart metering, demand side management; localised energy systems; Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS); cleaner and more efficient energy generation; energy storage; and ICT innovation. As noted above, the programme of interest is just one of the corporation's training and development schemes and in relation to collaboration it also runs a summer placement programme for undergraduates with a number of selected Higher Education institutions.[138]

How and in what ways did the collaboration/partnership develop and evolve?

The programme grew out of a realisation that by the turn of the 21st Century changes in the energy sector (in part as a result of privatisation and competition) and in higher education (where numbers on electrical engineering and associated courses was in decline) resulted in the industry facing considerable skills shortages alongside an ageing workforce profile.[139] While developments were put into motion in relation to graduate training schemes at Level 6 (EQF) and above, and also at Level 3 in the form of apprenticeships, it was felt that this would leave a significant and serious gap in the provision of Level 4 and Level 5 training.

> *In 2004, Aston University began discussions with two key power engineering utilities regarding level 4 and 5 provision, to support senior technicians and Incorporated Engineers working within the sector. A two-year, block release Foundation Degree in Power Engineering was developed and the first cohort graduated in the Summer of 2007. This programme has experienced rapid growth with typically circa 80-100 new entrants each year, 300 graduates to date across five different pathways. A progression pathway to BEng (hons) has also been established, the first cohort graduating in July 2012. Feedback from both graduates and employers has been overwhelmingly very positive, with graduates experiencing rapid career progression and employers reporting very high impact of these graduates to their operational business performance. (Ibid. p.3)*

Aston University has also developed a partnership to cater for Scottish recruits to SSE who will be employed in Scotland with the UHI, to deliver first year content north of the border. The University

[138] http://sse.com/careers/graduatesandundergraduates/

[139] Lukes, S. (2013)

delivers year two, which comprises significant power engineering-specific content. These arrangements not only optimise use of teaching resources, but also help the companies by using geographically convenient locations where practical.

What place, role, scope and scale do work-based/-related programmes/courses play in the academic institution?

Aston University has a long standing tradition of providing vocationally relevant employment and working in partnership with industry and employers to develop the workforce and provide students with relevant and appropriate work based and related learning. It delivers WBL in the form of Foundation Degrees and in addition to the FdEng Power Engineering which is the focus of the case study, it offers a complementary programme to the gas sector through its in FdEng Gas Transmission Engineering and it also delivers a FdEng Engineering which is a more general offering with alternate pathways from a common core leading to a range of engineering specialities.[140]

Aston is one of only four universities in the UK where over 50% of all undergraduates take integrated work placements and they have a dedicated team to assist students in finding appropriate placement providers.[141] Indeed the figure at Aston is over 70% of undergraduates taking a placement year between years 3 and 4 and Aston Business School makes a placement year a compulsory element of its undergraduate provision. The majority of placements are paid and the leaner is required to complete a placement essay or placement project as part of their degree assessment. In addition, the university has extended employer engagement to develop further foundation degree provision with Logistics (Royal Mail) and Gas Engineering (National Grid and Scotia Gas Networks.

Although UHI may in some respects be seen as a junior partner it is in the process of developing its work- based and work-related provision more generally. Specifically related to the provision it delivers for SSE in conjunction with Aston, it has now developed a BEng Scottish degree in collaboration with SSE which allows progression to degree level study and may eventually lead to the development of a separate Scottish based Trainee Engineer programme. The Careers and Employability Centre operates a placements database but the majority of the offers are for summer placements and as such are not fully integrated into academic provision. Finally it also offers a range of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) provision in areas including education, energy and health.[142]

[140]http://www.aston.ac.uk/eas/ug-student-handbooks/apec-work-based-learning/apec-programme-information/

[141] http://www.aston.ac.uk/study/undergraduate/placements/

[142] http://www.uhi.ac.uk/en/studying-at-uhi/professional-development

What role does education and training play in relation to organisation?

Scottish and Southern energy operate a comprehensive corporate training programme and the provision noted here is just one element of that. As noted, the Trainee Engineer programme could be described as intermediate level and sits between the apprenticeship and the graduate career entry routes.

> *SSE was a bit different to some of the other companies, as we were taking on people, school leavers, and their job for the first three years was to be a trainee. Whereas some of the other companies were developing staff in-house. (SSE, Training Director, retired)*

Apprenticeship provision includes three main routes into its Power Distribution apprenticeship which last four years; and a further three apprenticeships in its Power Generation sector. In addition, and like most corporate entities of its scale and scope, it has a range of graduate development programmes.[143] The company also delivers arrange of in house training in addition to the academic training which are necessary and required by regulations in relation to for example working with extremely high voltages.

5.3.4. The case study programme/course

Background data of the persons interviewed

Table 8
Background of interviewed Persons – Case 3

Learners	Academic representative	External stakeholders
Male, 24 years old, first year based in Scotland, studying at UHI	*Male, , Lecturer at UHI, Engineering background, mid 50s*	*Male, former Director of Trainee Engineer programme in Scotland, retired, engineering background, mid 60s.*
Female, 20 years old, first year based in Scotland, studying at UHI	*Male, , Lecturer at Aston, Director of programme, Engineering background, mid 50s*	

General programme information

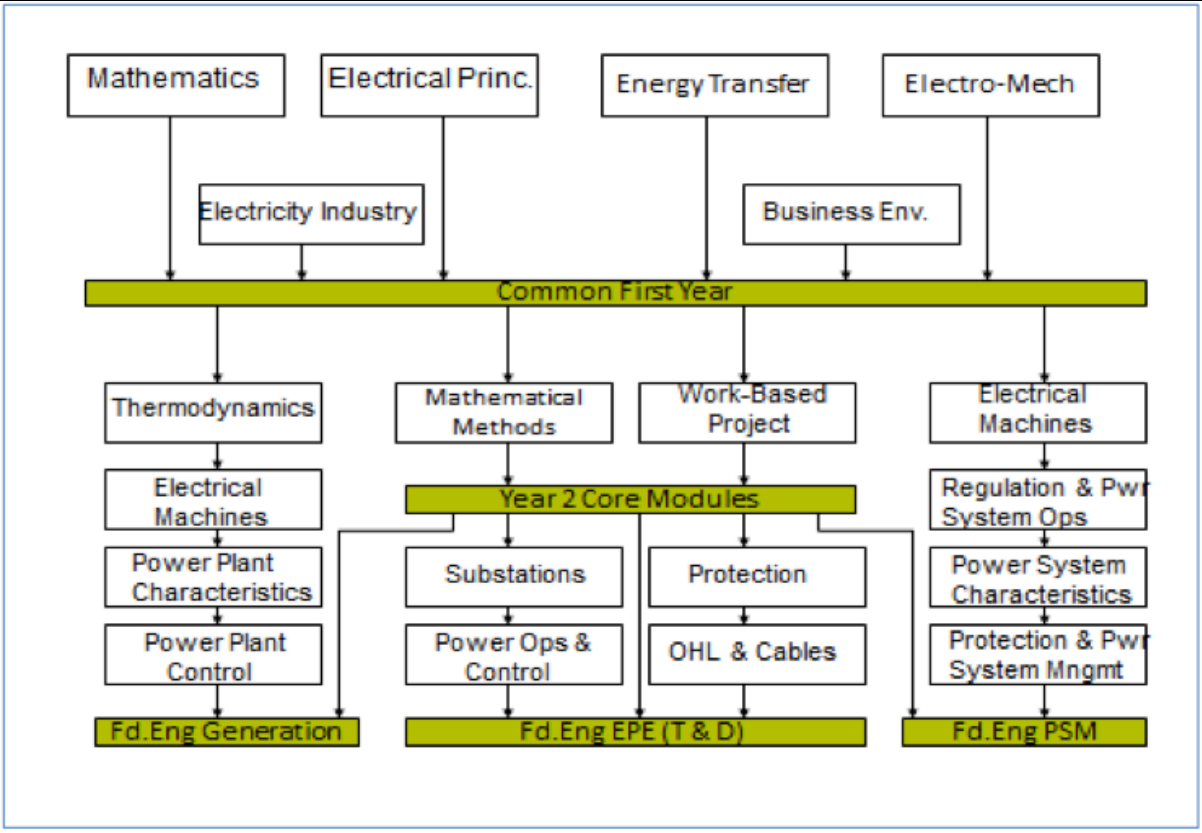
As already noted the FdEng Power Engineering is the two year academic based element of the three year Trainee Engineer programme and entrants are sponsored by their employers in SSE. The employee learners are paid a wage throughout their studies and in addition, the employer pays

[143] http://sse.com/careers/graduatesandundergraduates/

subsistence to leaners to attend the two week block release, and also attendance at its own training facilities.

The table below provides an overview of the structure of the programme. The Foundation Degree Programmes, of which the FdEng Power Engineering programme is one possible route, operate a common first year, comprising six 20 credit modules. In year 2 Mathematical Methods and the Work-based Project modules are common across the programmes, with four additional customised modules for each of the three prescribed pathways for Power Generation, Transmission and Distribution (the networks) and Power System Management (for control operations and system design).

Table 8
Programme Structure – Case 3



As already noted teaching is delivered either at Aston or UHI for the first year; with final year teaching at Aston. Modules are delivered in two week intensive blocks (approximately 13 weeks in total per year) with additional revision classes where necessary and required. The course is classed as full time even though they earn a wage as trainees and students are expected to carry out work assignments whilst off campus, based around their current job role. The programme is assessed by assignments, formal lectures, tutorial classes, work-based projects and examinations. In both intuitions, quality assurance operates in relation to academic standards and regulations which are

applied to all award bearing provision. In addition, learners will have other forms of assessment or evaluation undertaken as part of their employment requirements.

> *In their first year, the first assignment that they do is a report into the energy industry, the structure of it, since deregulation. The whole way it's been put together, and how it operates. And then, as each unit that - each module they do, there's an assignment based on the module. And often it's based on information they need from work. And in first year they do a small project based on – and it might not be any big deal. It might be just a transformer change or something like that. What it's more about is the kind of methodology of project management. (Lecturer, UHI, Male)*

Academic and administrative support is provided by both Aston and UHI in accordance with existing student support structures and processes. However, as noted by Luke (2013: p6) catering for block release students within a traditional university context can be problematic:

> *The Aston mode of delivery does not fit well with the traditional university calendar. Other than August, the work-based programmes are effectively a continuous operation. Timetabling is not an issue outside of normal undergraduate teaching periods, but gaining access to the locked rooms is another matter entirely! Maintenance tends to be carried out during these periods and standard university facilities such as catering, IT, student support and library facilities are at best severely reduced.*

5.3.5. Programme evaluation

Assessment at both institutions will be subject to quality assurance procedures to ensure quality of learning and also in relation to the student experience. In common with most academic institutions some form of feedback and evaluation is standard practice and will be taken at both the module level and also at the level of the overall programme. The corporate training division will also evaluate the programme in terms of indicators on retention, performance and progression; however it will be subject to evaluation in terms of cost/benefit analysis to ensure that it is cost effective and efficient in terms of providing skilled and work ready Trainee Engineers. In addition, during the programme learners will be evaluated on a range of skills and competences required for safe and effective job performance and this will be recorded and form part of the employees training log.

Aston has also undertaken an in-depth case study evaluation and in terms of academic performance it notes:

> *The drop-out rate is extremely low (< 2% over 5 years, compared with a sector average of 11.3%) and the performance of the students is far higher than average, despite the programme being technically challenging. This is far better than for most other, conventional undergraduate students, and even the low levels of 6.9% at our University. Almost 500 students have graduated from these programmes to date. 26% of graduates have been awarded Distinctions (> 70% overall mark), and a further 36% gained Merit awards (> 60% overall mark).*[144]

In the case of SSE, when tuition fees increased (from £1750 per year to £7500 per year) the university did have some concerns about the reaction of SSE to what was a considerable increase in costs. However, as noted above, SSE will evaluate provision on a cost/benefit model and as illustrated below the increased fees were of little consequence.

> *…. that cost (tuition fees) is completely insignificant to the cost of employing the guy, paying his travelling and paying his accommodation, you know, and paying him for not to be at his desk sort of thing, you know. So the view was very much within the scheme of things actually the costs of the course weren't a big issue at all. And they was quite happy to make the investment, you know. I mean when you add it up now it's... to put somebody through the foundation degree is what, about fifteen and a half thousand. I believe that, you know, they've sat down and calculated and I think it costs a company something in the order of £120,000 plus. So……. (Programme Director, Aston)*

5.3.6. Programme Impact

In terms of institutional impact, for both Aston University and UHI, as a result of corporate planning it allows a relatively stable prediction of the supply of entrants to the programme over the medium (5 years) term. It is presumably this relative stability in demand that has led UHI to develop its own provision and further develop its WBL provision. In addition, the model has been and can be delivered to wider energy sector.

Specifically in relation to Aston:

> *Establishment of the Electrical Power Engineering Foundation Degree, and other programmes, via the Foundation Degree Centre enabled the University to increase its student numbers and to obtain the associated, additional teaching funding from HEFCE, (approx. 300 additional students and over £3M) The success of the Foundation Degree Centre operation was well received by Hefce and has resulted in a further Transition*

[144] Aston University Employer Engagement Case Study, (p.4) Internal document supplied by author

> *Funding award of £250k to enable the University to consolidate further employer engagement, in particular around continued progression of their staff to Bachelors and Masters Degrees.(Op. cit. p6)*

The following quote is from a Trainee in their first year studying at UHI and career prospects and earning while studying is probably a fairly common reason for applying for the programme especially in the current climate and even more so in England as SSE pays the tuition costs.

> *My father works for the company and so I knew about the opportunities and a bit about the company in terms of culture and some expectations of what was required and on balance I though starting in the company and being paid was a better option than doing a traditional electrical engineering degree at university. And it was local! (Learner, Female, 20, first year)*

In addition to getting paid while studying, the prospects of moving seamlessly into employment were also noted by interviewees and confirmed in interviews with academic representatives. As noted in the following quote from a recently retired direct of the trainee programme in Scotland when asked about the impact of the programme:

> *… it's a good programme as far as both the company and the trainees are concerned and the retention rates were very high… and I mean the guys are coming out twenty-six to about thirty-two thousand a year on their first job … and a lot of them are getting on the company car scheme and things .. … the old guys are all retiring and the opportunities of promotion are quite quick for suitable candidates right now. (SSE, Training Director, retired)*

5.3.7. Case summary

What do we learn from this case study with respect to project targets?

The case presents a model of collaboration originally developed by academia and the power generation sector and was designed for those already employed in sector but requiring upskilling to meet demand for skills in ageing workforce. Entrants are a mix of those +/- 25 year old and mix of (increasingly) new recruits and existing workers so generally meet LETEA criteria. It can also be seen as an example of a relatively sustainable programme with corporate planning allowing prediction of demand at least in the medium term. Finally recruitment to Trainee programme rather than the academic course means learner are earning while they learn and with good prospects of a skilled and

relatively secure career at the end of the programme. Finally it is a good example of alignment of academic with vocational competences and knowledge.

What are the lessons for designing and implementing such programmes in other institutions and in other countries?

The balance that has been achieved in relation to the integration of academic demands with the employer's requirements for its employee's skills and competences is a strength of this programme; although it requires the economies of scale to allow it to be sustainable for the learning providers. It is also suggested that corporate planning in its focus on the medium term does allow a degree of sustainability to the partnership. As noted, the delivery mode of block release can cause problems with an academic and administrative timetable geared to traditional delivery methods and formats; however, it appears to cause less disruption to the employer. In addition, and also as noted, support systems may need to be redesigned to cater for remote students who will often be in locations remote from the university for long periods of their studies on the programme.

How can such programmes be improved and implemented effectively?

It is suggested that the case presented here is the result of long and detailed negotiations between the academic providers and SSE (and as noted other utility providers). As noted previously, providers and employers often seem to talk a different language and there are differences in their respective ability to adapt to change in terms of lead times. So a key issue for effective programmes of this nature is to ensure at the outset what exactly each partner means and what are realisable and unrealisable requests.

> *But yeah, I mean on several occasions shall we say companies have sort of like overstepped the mark a little bit and started making demands that we cannot meet and all that. But, you know, and like I say we have a good relationship so, you know, tongue in cheek and they know I'm smiling but meaning it (overtalk) I say, "Look, I don't tell you how to run your programme, you don't tell me how to run mine. If I had to run your network, ….. you don't tell me how to run my programme." (Programme Director, Aston)*

It is suggested that making things clear at the outset has had a major impact and has resulted in a model that appears to be fit for purpose and does not require any major changes in content and delivery other than the usual updating of content.

6. Comparison of the three case studies noting both similarities and difference

6.1. Partnership and collaboration models

The three cases illustrate three different forms of work-based and work-related collaborations and partnerships each driven by different forces. Drawing loosely on Marxist analysis one possible interpretation it could be argued is that each element is driven by different social forces in society characterised as the state, labour and capital

Case 1 can be seen as driven by state or governmental priorities in relation to regulating and funding the reproduction of labour power through education and training provision for workers in the public sector. This collaboration, linked to Outcome Agreements which are negotiated between the state and the providers and regulators of community learning and development provides a stream of qualified and accredited workers to public services and also provides a function in upskilling or professionalises existing workers many of whom have little or no previous educational qualifications.

Case 2 can be seen to be driven by organised labour in the form of the Unite trade union and its promotion and defence of members interests in relation to job security, career progression and the development of individual potential. It has achieved this in negotiation with representatives of capital in the form of employers to provide members with the opportunities to increase skills, competences and knowledge though relevant and appropriate training and learning opportunities.

Finally in relation to Case 3, we can see the influence of capital attempting to address labour shortages as a result of earlier downsizing and restructuring in the aftermath of the privatisation of energy and utility sectors of the UK economy under the Thatcher government of the 1980s. This resulted in the financing of training and education at the intermediate level being severely curtailed. Recognising that the visible hand of the market was not going to achieve sufficient recruitment an alternative approach was required to provide a stream of new entrants at the intermediate level to replace the current ageing workforce.

6.2. Mix of academic and practice elements

All three cases differ in the balance of academic and practice elements although all three have integrated at least some assessed practice elements to a greater and lesser extent. In terms of integration, Case 1 has perhaps the greatest degree of formal integration of academic and practice based elements with a 60/40 split with the amount of time to be spent on placements codified and completion of set hours is required for accreditation by the professional body. Learners in Case 2 however, have probably the greatest engagement with the work place, but it is only tangentially and perhaps as they proceed through their studies that they will be able to use and apply the knowledge,

skills and competences they acquire as part of their studies. In addition their study is in addition to the demands of employment and their work practice on the shop-floor is not assessed as part of the degree although there are study week requirements each year to enable access to high quality engineering labs. Finally while Case 3 has elements of practice which are undertaken as part of the formal programme this generally is as an aid to demonstrate putting theory into practice. Much perhaps most of the substantive practice based elements of the overall programme are out with the academic programme and take place as part of the on the job training that comprises the Trainee Engineer programme. Indeed all learners also spend a portion of time at the company's own training school to learn specific skills which although assessed by the employer do not contribute to the degree. Moreover, the third year of Case 3 is spent entirely in employment where further training takes place.

6.3. Evaluation and impact – internal, external and personal

As outlined above, all three case study programmes operate comprehensive systems of evaluation. In relation to the academic institutions involved in the case studies, all operate an internal system of review, monitoring and student feedback which is applicable to all academic provision. In addition, all have formal channels involving student representatives to provide feedback and raise concerns about the programmes; and as with all academic provision programmes are subject to quality assurance both internally through institutional regulations on the award of degrees and externally through the QAA Scotland. As we have seen in Case 2 the trade union through their ULRs also evaluate the provision independently of the academic evaluation and learners are discussed at regular progress meetings between ULRs and management representatives. In Case 3, a dual system of evaluation could be said to be in operation with academic partners, and employers undertaking evaluation though the rationale may differ. Academic evaluation will be more focused on quality assurance of its academic provision but will also evaluate the programme in terms of the student experience to ensure equity across all groups of students no matter mode of level of study. Finally on Case 1 in addition to standard processes of academic evaluation common across cases, evaluation will also be undertaken by placement providers and also importantly for accreditation by the regulatory body.

6.4. Advantages and disadvantages of models (SWOT) UK Cases

Table 9 **SWOT - Case 1: BA Community Development (BACD) – CLD Standards Council for Scotland – Local Authority/Third Sector Practice Placements**	
Strengths	Route to Professional Accreditation for adult workers/activists often lacking in traditional educational qualifications; flexible delivery to aid work/life/study balance
Weaknesses	Provision seen as marginal by some at institutional level
Opportunities	Expansion to post-graduate level ; discussions underway with UNITE trade union Community Learning to explore possible collaboration
Threats	Placements and employment often linked to short-term funding at threat in current austerity climate and cuts in public services

Table 10 **SWOT - Case 2: Bachelor in Engineering (Hons.) UNITE Trade Union – Open University in Scotland – Rolls Royce**	
Strengths	Creation of organic learning culture within organisation by Union Learning Reps; peer support mechanisms; flexibility and support inherent in OU model
Weaknesses	Impact on work/study life balance requires significant commitment by workers/learners
Opportunities	Expansion of model to other organisations/industrial sectors
Threats	External pressures on manufacturing and sector more generally; workforce/plant restructuring

Table 11 **SWOT - Case 3: Foundation Degree in Electrical Power Engineering – Aston University/UHI – Scottish and Southern Energy**	
Strengths	Fixed/planned demand from SSE ensures some sustainability; block release mode of study; integration with regulatory/safety requirements of industry
Weaknesses	In relation to LETAE criteria seems to be shifting from upskilling existing employees to new trainees
Opportunities	Expansion to Honours level provision and also to postgraduate levels; increasing provision for other companies in sector
Threats	External pressures on sector and economy more generally

7. Detailed typology of Case Studies

Table 12
Detailed Typology of cases

	Case Study I	Case Study II	Case Study III
Institutional Setting (University centred, outsourced entity, Knowledge transfer etc……..)	*University owned and controlled ; but 60/40 academic and practice based*	*Distance learning, but based in two industrial plants with on-site support provided by both OU and trade union*	*University delivery augmented by on the job training as part of corporate training programme*
Partnership and collaboration type or form	*Public sector collaboration between university and local authority and third sector*	*Trade union initiative supported by OUiS and after negotiation buy-in by Rolls Royce at branch plant level*	*Corporate led and driven with academic partners responsible for assessment and delivery*
Target (Unemployed, Employed, Students)	*Unqualified workers in sector many of whom are over 25*	*Union members employed in engineering shop-floor at two Scottish plants of multinational employer*	*School leavers, graduates and existing employees, recruited through corporate structures*
Access to the Program (University degree, open to everybody, degree and professional experience etc…..)	*By Interview but conditions apply in relation to experience and due to requirements of practice based accreditation*	*Voluntary but through negotiation with ULRs to ensure learners have sufficient study skills and preparation with numbers capped each year due to budgetary constraints*	*By interview by employer, but must satisfy entry requirements of academic institutions particularly in the level of mathematics required*
Construction of the Program: (Incidental, Stand alone, Structural, Integrated)	*Integrated programme of School of Education with postgraduate progression possible; conforms to university regulations*	*Distance learning modular credit accumulation system; learners progress at their own pace; standard offering by OUiS in terms of structure of degree programme*	*Two–week periods of block release over two years with normal employment and associated training between blocks. 3rd year spent in industry*
Outcome: Award/certificate/degree type or professional	*BA degree and Accreditation by CLDS Scotland; requires 1500*	*BEng degree award although with possibility of*	*Foundation degree in Power Engineering and*

Table 12 Detailed Typology of cases			
	Case Study I	**Case Study II**	**Case Study III**
recognition	*hours of practice based to qualify for accreditation*	*Incorporated Engineer status*	*after satisfying regulations Incorporated Engineer status*
Intended Impact: (Career development, Improved practice, Changed practice)	*Career progression and job security and improved practice*	*Personal development; possible career progression or change; but with impact on day to day work*	*Replacement of an ageing workforce at intermediate technical level*
Evaluation (measured in what ways)	*University evaluation in accordance with QAA, National Student Survey; Reaccreditation required every 5 years*	Tripartite system of evaluation undertaken by OU, Unite and also by Rolls Royce	*Both internal and stakeholder evaluations. Academic evaluation undertaken in accordance with QAA methods in both institutions; SSE has in house evaluation of training programmes*
Impact (measured in what ways)	*Student demand, Student destinations, student feedback and ongoing relationships between ex-students and programme*	*Learner demand; learner progression and impact on day to day work practices. Increased awareness of union activities; possible impact on industrial relations with developing trust between management and labour*	*Retention both on the programme and in employment. Internal impact by academic providers and external impact evaluation undertaken by employers*
Social inclusion: (human capital, social capital, cultural capital)	*Aids development of human social and cultural capital*	*Development of human, cultural and social capital through participation and peer mentoring systems in place*	*Most relevant perhaps to upskilling existing employees; but elements of human, social and cultural capital*

Table 12 Detailed Typology of cases			
	Case Study I	**Case Study II**	**Case Study III**
Quality of Life: (labour market status; Economic security, Knowledge and Intellectual development, Social relations, Balance of time)	*Increased quality of life through improved prospects and associated benefits; increased confidence in practice and life generally; although possible negative impact on work/life/study balance*	*Increased confidence, self-esteem and possible increased satisfaction at work; possible negative impact on quality of life due to demands on work/life/study balance. Improved career prospects.*	*Entrants and employees receive a competitive salary when on the course in addition to subsistence and expenses when on block release. Good career prospects both nationally and internationally*
Future prospects	*Sustainable in the short to medium term but vulnerable to cuts in funding in placement organisations and public and third sector more generally*	*Sustainable in present form in short-term however subject to changes in funding regimes and also in terms of corporate restructuring involving redundancies could impact negatively on labour/management relations*	*Subject to corporate demand and support from industry sector training boards but sustainable in medium term*

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9. Appendix 1

Table 13 Interview Protocol Matrix		
Learners	Lecturers/trainers	Enterprises
Background data Age, experience, qualifications	Background data Experience, qualifications, role in programme	Background Data Type of enterprise, role, background
Decision making process – why programme?	Decision making process – why provision of programme	Decision making process – why involvement in provision
Motivations for entering the course		
	Programme design process	Programme design process
General programme information: Duration, fees, delivery	General programme information: Credit, level, awards	General programme information:
Expectations		Expectations
	Target groups	Target groups
Experience with learning: 1 academic 2 workplace		
Programme evaluation	Programme evaluation Formal and/or informal mechanisms	Programme evaluation: How and in what ways?
Individual evaluation: Qualification/knowledge or competences Labour market outcomes	Academic and workplace evaluation - balance	Workplace evaluation: Skills/competences Other measures – profitability or efficiency
	Programme content – balance between academic and practice or work-based components	Programme content – balance between academic and practice or work-based components
Impact of course/programme: Employment Financial Work/life balance		Impact of programme: Efficiency Quality of work Competence and skill development